PARADIGM SHIFT: A MODEL FOR CLERGY AND CONGREGATIONS TO PARTNER AND ADOPT HOLISTIC APPROACHES TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS

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ABSTRACT

PARADIGM SHIFT: A MODEL FOR CLERGY AND CONGREGATIONS
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The context is Advent UCC in Columbus, Ohio. The problem present in the context are members and clergy at Advent UCC have insufficient tools to engage in self-care that will contribute to their life. If project participants at Advent UCC take part in an educational symposium on holistic health, then they will be equipped to engage in self-care that will add to their life. This project was conducted over seven weeks. Data was collected utilizing surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews. Because members and clergy participated in the educational symposium, they were equipped to engage in self-care.

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I am eternally grateful to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who birthed this desire in me from the beginning. I am grateful to God for the purpose that he has for me and has kept me alive and well throughout this entire process. I am sincerely grateful to the mentors of the Gardner C. Taylor Scholars Cohort, Rev. Dr. Leroy Cothran and Dr. J. Randy Grimes for their guidance, wisdom, leadership, and for modeling responsible behavior in front of me. I want to thank Rev. Dr. Harold Hudson, whom I met at a function that involved the partnership of clergy and the community. Dr. Hudson encouraged me to apply for the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary.

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I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my immediate family. I would not be where I am today if it were not for you. Because of your love, support, and the wings beneath my wings, I would not have been able to make it to this point. To my wife, Rev.

Dr. Imani Jones, I am eternally grateful to you. You are my world. To Tyshon Holden, Dominique Shamar Jones, and Colin Adair Jones, II, I owe you my love.

DEDICATION

I dedicate the beginning of my life's work to my father, Otis Zephoria Jones, Sr. I told my father at his funeral on October 16, 2007 that I will get my doctorate degree, and here I am. I dedicate this work to my beloved mother, Ruby J. Jones who passed away November 8, 2020, during the writing of this dissertation. I am grateful for your love.

I also dedicate this work to the love of my life. A woman who has loved me and who epitomizes what excellence is, my wife, Rev. Dr. Imani Jones.

If you think you are beaten, you are; If you think you dare not, you don't. If you'd like to win, but you think you can't, It is almost a cinch you won't. If you think you'll lose, you've lost; For out in this world we find Success begins with a fellow's will It's all in the state of mind. If you think you're outclassed, you are; You've got to think high to rise. You've got to be sure of yourself before, You can ever win the prize. Life's battles don't always go To the stronger or faster man; But sooner or later the person who wins Is the one who thinks he can!

—Walter D. Wintle

INTRODUCTION

The title of this doctoral project is a "Paradigm Shift: A Model for Clergy and Congregations to Partner and Adopt Holistic Approaches to Health and Wellness." A health and wellness program was created in the context of Advent United Church of Christ in Columbus, Ohio. The program created was called the "Inside Out Health Initiative" and the purpose was to challenge and encourage clergy and the members of the Advent United Church of Christ to incorporate and adopt healthier behaviors into their lives. The project focused simultaneously on internal and external ways one can be healthy for an overall better quality of life. This initiative focused on three areas that encompass the whole person: spiritual, mental, and physical. The overarching goal from the outset of the program was not to lose weight. The aim was to explore the degree to which participants made more informed choices and to see if they are willing to change behavior regarding their mental, spiritual, and physical wellbeing.

For the past four years, I had the privilege of serving as pastor of the Advent United Church of Christ. My problem is that there are many health concerns within the congregation such as strokes, cancers, multiple sclerosis, hypertension, obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and mental health concerns. My hypothesis is if program participants at the Advent United Church of Christ take part in an educational symposium on holistic health, then they will be equipped to engage in self-care that will add to their quality of life. My desire is to serve a congregation that collectively strives toward

incorporating healthier behaviors. Moreover, as the clergyperson elected to serve over this congregation, the onus is on me to model responsible behavior in front of the congregation.

Throughout this dissertation, each chapter is separated into themes designed to support the overall vision for the research project implemented in the context. Being healthy from the inside out requires an intentional and holistic approach. Being healthy from the inside out requires an approach and a vision for long-term results rather than short-term gain. In the context of the church or community, there are many health issues that not only can be managed or cured but prevented as well. Through a holistic approach to health and wellness with a lot of dedicated work through proper nutrition, consistent exercise, and self-care alone, one can greatly reduce one's risk of experiencing strokes, certain kinds of cancers, hypertension, obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and a whole host of health problems.

The church can play a role and should play a role in influencing the congregation to live healthier lives, not only spiritually, but mentally and physically as well. The church not only should have great concern about the spiritual welfare of the congregation, but it should cater its mission to that which affects the entire person. The church should engage in the political climate because politics affect the people in both positive and negative ways. The church should engage in social justice because social justice affects the people in both positive and negative ways. Also, the church should engage in the economic empowerment of the congregation because economic opportunity or the lack thereof affects the people.

Just as this is the case, the church ought to engage in the holistic health of the congregation. Oftentimes, clergy or leadership is called to the hospital to provide prayer and sacrament to those in the hospital. While this is a noble activity and something that should not be neglected, it would be a powerful force if clergy and members of the congregation would both enter partnership to live a holistic and healthy lifestyle. Through this commitment, clergy could potentially limit how often a hospital visitation is needed. Of course, some illnesses arise even when one dots every "I" and crosses every "T;" however, the attempt would go a long way.

My overall desire is to see a genuine and much needed partnership between the clergy and congregations they have the privileges of serving. I stress partnership to communicate the idea that relationship ought not be primarily one-sided, where clergy contributes so much more than the congregation is willing to offer. Too many clergy sacrificed their personal health, family, personal goals, and aspirations, all in the name of service to God and the church. While noble and acknowledging that there will be an inevitable degree of service offered, one's personal life, health, and family should not suffer because of an imbalance. Placing a value on health is a principle that ought to be communicated and modeled in front of the congregation.

As it relates to health and wellness, how can the scripture be applied to support this overall theme? The Bible was used as a genuine source of faith, hope, and direction. My particular focus of study, as it relates to health and wellness, brought me to the passage of First Corinthians. The Apostle Paul has a unique perspective on the appropriate usage of the body, and the body being optimally healthy magnifies the ability to glorify God. Throughout the program, teaching about how we should treat the body

that God gave us through nutrition, exercise, rest and processing emotional concerns all play a role in what it means to be healthy from a holistic perspective. Connecting faith and the body is extremely important.

As it relates to health and wellness, how can a figure in history support the overall thrust of the project? Jonathan Edwards, eighteenth century theologian and philosopher, is the picture of the entire project. Jonathan Edwards embodied what it meant to lack adequate skills in the area self-care. Jonathan Edwards sacrificed family, health, and himself all in the name of service to God and the church. Throughout, the programs stressed self-care and work-life balance for a deserved quality of life. The programs expressed the necessity of reestablishing values and how then making life choices that are consistent with those values is of utmost importance.

As it relates to health and wellness, how can theology be employed to support this overall theme? Developing a theology of sabbath is crucial to overall health and wellness. Sabbath is a cessation from all work. Being still long enough to think about the value of rest and taking a break contributes to the overall quality of life. What does rest look like for someone who is more than one job, a family, in school, and has other aspirations? Throughout the program, we taught on the value of being still and trying to take intentional moments of pause.

As it relates to health and wellness, how can an outside discipline, such as public health, help shape the conversation surrounding the overall theme? The other disciplines that informed the research and the project all had spiritual foundations; however, public health is an outside perspective. Public health helps shape the argument for the necessity of living a healthy lifestyle because it takes into consideration what is in the universal

best interests of the community. We looked at the transtheoretical model and the process of change. We explored the processes necessary to implement change over a longer period. Participants in the research project took an introspective and realistic viewpoint to determine if change is something that they will work towards.

In chapter one of this document, Advent United Church of Christ is the ministry context and its history, previous pastoral leaders, its work in the community will all be explored. In addition to the history of Advent, an exploration into the personal story of its current leader will also be flushed out and special attention will be shared as the two parties have overlapping interests.

In chapter two, offers a brief overview of the biblical narrative, this passage placed a spotlight on the Apostle Paul and how he expresses his perspective over what is the appropriate usage of the body. The biblical foundation contends that the Apostle Paul holds the belief in the text that the human body should be used in a certain way, and if used out of this context, Paul deems it as inappropriate and a misuse of the body. Paul views his body, as evidenced throughout many of his other epistles, as the actual body of Christ. The motivation behind his concern is that the body houses the most precious gift of all—the Holy Spirit. As such the body becomes the temple of God. Since the body is a temple, it should be treated with respect and high regard, and should function in the most optimal way. One should not limit this understanding of the body to sexual expression. Instead, we ought to live our lives in the healthiest of ways, so that the body can operate in the most optimal way.

In addition to the Bible contributing a great deal to the overall project, in chapter three, the historical figure, Jonathan Edwards contributes much as well. Although

Jonathan Edwards was a great man and a towering figure in the early eighteenth century, he was also a human being with faults and failures. Some paradigm shifts exist from which Jonathan Edwards could benefit by improving his life and the life of his family if he implemented them. Jonathan Edwards, a clergyperson, learned the value of having a strong work ethic, but at what cost? He sacrificed significantly when it came to family and his own personal health. Like Edwards, many clergy today have a deep desire and commitment to serve God and devote their lives towards this ideal. Building ministries, serving people, and improving their quality of life is important; however, for too long clergy sacrificed their families, physical or mental health in the name of service to God. Does God really require one to sacrifice those things all to serve? Is this what God desires, or is this an interpretation of what God desires for us and have we possibly missed the mark?

An additional principle that this project highlights is the spiritual concept of Sabbath. In chapter four, a theology of Sabbath is explored as seen through the lens of noted biblical scholar and theologian Walter Brueggemann. The ultimate argument is that it may neither be practical nor possible to devote a full twenty-four hours each week to act upon Sabbath. While that may not be possible, one should consider intentionally devoting a portion of time each week for a sabbath's rest. Throughout the program we sought to explore to what degree the idea of sabbath could contribute to one's overall health, albeit physical, mental, and spiritual.

This project also afforded me the opportunity to explore public health as another discipline. In chapter five, we explore how public health is a science that intentionally targets the community and seeks to promote and protect the wellbeing of the entire

community, especially communities with lesser resources. In addition to the public health discipline, the transtheoretical model was chosen because this theory provides insight into the thought process behind how people begin to change and adopt new behaviors for better outcomes. The transtheoretical theory is a process of change and was explored in the congregational setting as participants engaged in the health initiative.

Finally, chapter six of this document explores the actual implementation of the Inside Out Health Initiative, which is the research project conducted at the Advent United Church of Christ. This chapter will provide a general overview of the project as well as provide detail of the facilitators, participants, content, and the methods by which data was collected and interpreted.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The title of this doctoral project is a "Paradigm Shift: A Model for Clergy and Congregations to Partner and Adopt Holistic Approaches to Health and Wellness." I created a health and wellness program in my context, Advent United Church of Christ in Columbus, Ohio, which is the congregation I am privileged to serve as co-pastor along with my wife. The program created is called the "Inside Out Health Initiative." The purpose was to challenge and encourage clergy and the members of the Advent United Church of Christ to incorporate and adopt healthier behaviors into the culture of their lives. The aim was to focus simultaneously on internal and external ways one can be healthy for an overall better quality of life. The initiative focused on three areas which encompasses the whole person: spiritual, mental, and physical. The overarching goal from the outset of the program was not to lose weight. The aim was to explore to what degree are the participants able to make more informed choices and to see if they are willing to change behavior regarding their mental, spiritual, and physical wellbeing.

I have had the privilege of serving as pastor of the Advent United Church of Christ for the past three years. I have observed many health concerns within the congregation, such as: strokes, cancers, multiple sclerosis, hypertension, obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and mental health concerns. I myself suffered a devastating heart attack, largely due to unknown family history and poor nutritional

behavior. My hypothesis is, if project participants at the Advent United Church of Christ take part in an educational symposium on holistic health, then they will be equipped to engage in self-care that will add to their quality of life. My hypothesis seeks to solve the problem of members and clergy at the Advent United Church of Christ having insufficient or inadequate tools to engage in self-care that will contribute to their quality of life. It is my desire to serve a congregation that is collectively striving towards the incorporation of healthier behaviors. Moreover, as the clergy person elected to serve over this congregation, the onus is on me to model responsible behavior in front of the congregation.

The health of any congregation is paramount to its overall vitality and moving the mission and vision forward is a major component to its long-term impact in the community. There is a direct relationship between the health of the minister and how he or she can adequately serve the congregation. It is imperative for the leader to not only be healthy spiritually, but their own physical and mental health is just as important to assist the church in moving forward in a positive and meaningful direction. Too often, the physical, spiritual, and mental health of a leader, for various reasons, can go neglected and sacrificed. For many leaders who are privileged to serve congregations, if given the option to serve a congregation that is physically, spiritually, and mentally healthy, it is plausible to conclude that many would opt to serve in that location; however, I resolve that is unfair to place expectations on a people what leaders themselves are unwilling to model in front of that congregation. The leader of a congregation has been called, not to be perfect, but to model responsible behavior. This is not limited to spiritual or moral

behavior, but inclusive of living a healthy lifestyle. In this synergy chapter, I will draw a parallel between my spiritual autobiography and my contextual analysis.

There are many leaders within the church who have suffered from various health challenges, spiritual crisis, and mental stress or fatigue. Unfortunately, for some, leaders have continued to serve God without appropriating proper time to address those concerns. Oftentimes, leaders within the church risk sacrificing themselves in the name of serving God. I am not providing a judgement; however, as I make observations, I do propose a paradigm shift. I seek to create a model that will not only encourage leaders but challenge the congregation as well to adopt a wholistic approach to health and wellness.

In the previous congregation my wife and I were privileged to serve, I sacrificed time away from my family and moved to Cleveland, Ohio in the name of service to God and the church. I felt led by the spirit to build the church. We had been serving the congregation for four years up to that point and had been commuting between Columbus and Cleveland every weekend and during the week for Bible study. Eventually this became a greater strain on my family than I originally anticipated. The total time I was in Cleveland was two years and it took my son sharing his truth for me to see how much of an impact my absence was having on him. My son was eight years old at the time. One day, we were having a conversation about salmon that my wife was going to prepare, and he mentioned that he loved salmon.

I provided a rebuttal and said, “Colin, you don’t like salmon.” He informed me that he did, and we were going back and forth in a light-hearted way, and he said something to me that struck me to my core. My son said, “Yes I do, Dad. You don’t know because you are not here.” He did not express this in an inappropriate way, he was

simply stating his truth. This statement rocked me to my core, and I began to reflect on what does ministry look like in lieu of my family. Is this what God desires? Does God desire for me to build the church while sacrificing my family at the same time? From that day forward, I had to reassert what was a value in my life and set family as my true priority. I was not willing to sacrifice and lose my children or my marriage in the name of service to the church. In his book, *Seven Habits of Highly Successful People,* Stephen Covey says, "The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities."[1] My son taught me that I needed to schedule him and the rest of the family as a priority. He also helped me to understand my family was not only just as important to the church, but in fact, more important than the church.

On the first Sunday in February of 2018, the Advent United Church of Christ in Columbus, Ohio embarked on a courageous faith journey to call its very first male and female, a husband-and-wife team, as its new pastors. Prior to calling its first couple, the church had previously been served by five different pastors since the church was founded in 1976. There had been a female pastor who served as the senior pastor and a female interim pastor. The Advent United Church of Christ (Advent UCC) is in the state of Ohio, which is in the midwestern region of the country. Columbus is the capital of the state, and Advent is uniquely positioned to serve within the city. It is a predominately African American congregation that resides on the Northeast side of the city, and it falls within Franklin County. The church has a rich history and has played a major role in the city through civic engagement. At this time, Advent UCC is considered a smaller congregation with less than one hundred members; however, at one time the congregation

[1] Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,* 30th anniversary ed. (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2020), 183.

boasted a few hundred in membership. The ministry at Advent is a progressive ministry and it continually seeks and strives to be on the cutting edge.

The motto of Advent UCC is: Love God. Love People. Period. This motto fully captures the ethos and culture of Advent's past and present values. Under previous leadership, Advent was very intentional on opening its doors to the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and queer community. Both then and now, Advent UCC desires to create an environment that nurtures and promotes acceptance, as opposed to tolerance. Acceptance is radically embracing and accepting someone into a group and considering them as part of that group even if there are disagreements. Tolerance is conditionally interacting with people and permitting verbiage and behavior against them, even if it causes harm. The Advent UCC ministry seeks to accept all people by incorporating them into the fold verses keeping people with different perspectives on the periphery. Of course, the idea of acceptance versus tolerance is nothing new. It is my interpretation of the gospel narrative that Jesus embraced and accepted all people. Even if the people that Jesus served refused, rejected, and rebuffed his ministry, Jesus did not tolerate humanity. Even with differing perspectives, Jesus sought to embrace the multitude and incorporate them into the fold.

There are several different resources that surround Advent UCC that helps to shape the community. Within its vicinity, there are three institutions of higher learning, such as: Cassady Elementary School, Mifflin Middle and High School. Immediately across the street from Advent UCC is the Howard Community Recreation Center from which many youths from the surrounding neighborhoods participate. It is interesting to note that Advent UCC is immediately surrounded by three neighborhoods: Cumberland

Ridge (housing development), Summer Set (housing development) and Cassady Village (apartment complex). The first two housing developments predominately consist of African Americans and the apartment complex is made up of a very large Somali population. Columbus, Ohio has the largest population of the Somalian people second to Minnesota within the United States.

Advent UCC owned and still possesses a large portion of land; however, prior to our arrival as their new pastors, the Advent UCC church sold a portion of its property to a not-for-profit organization which serves families in need. I am pleased with the decision to sell a portion of its property to the not-for-profit because I believe, whenever possible, that the role of the church is to partner with organizations within its community that seek to improve the quality of life for as many people who desire the extra support. At the time, like many smaller congregations, Advent was a financially struggling congregation, and it was a mutually beneficial business decision. Not only is the mission of Advent to improve the quality of life for the community, but Advent is a part of a denomination that advocates for those same ideals and principles. The Advent church is a part of the United Church of Christ Denomination. The UCC is a mainline Protestant denomination. There are nearly two million UCC members throughout the United States. The denomination is predominantly White, with a very low membership percentage being African American.

Having established that the United Church of Christ is primarily White, there is an advocacy group for African Americans and other minorities within the denomination. The United Black Christians (UBC) is the lay caucus for African Americans in the UCC. The United Black Christians meet every two years. The United Black Christians is for the

lay members of the church and the African American ministers are represented by the Ministers for Racial and Social Justice (MRSJ).

The emblem of the United Church of Christ is very distinctive. It is based on the ancient Christian symbol known as the Cross of Victory, or the Cross Triumphant. Traditionally, this symbol – the Cross surmounted by the crown and all of it atop the orb – symbolizes the kingship of the risen Christ over the world. The orb, representing the world, is divided into three parts to signify Jesus' command to his disciples: "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). For the United Church of Christ, this emblem is rich in the traditions of the past and alive with the hope for the future, is particularly appropriate. For this reason, around the perimeter of the emblem is the name of the denomination and Jesus' words, a prayer which he prayed to God in the gospel of John, "…that they may all be one" (Jn. 14:4)

The Advent United Church of Christ is unique in that it is the only African American UCC congregation in Columbus, Ohio. Advent held its first worship service on the first Sunday of Advent in 1976. Services were held in a party house that was donated to Advent by the alumni of Tuskegee Institute. The founding pastor served for a total of five years and after a couple of interim pastors, Advent was able to find another pastor; however, he only served for a year. The congregation had high hopes that he would serve for many years; and it is unclear as to the reason why he departed. The next pastor served the congregation for two years and he was responsible for beginning construction on the new and current building Advent now identifies as home.

Over the course of the fourteen years of ministry, Advent UCC had been led by several senior and interim pastors and because of patriarchy and tradition, they were all male. Since its inception, Advent UCC has consistently viewed itself as a progressive ministry. In December of 1989, the church called its first female minister to serve as their senior pastor. Under her leadership, the church grew exponentially and with a particular focus on reaching out to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community. Advent UCC aligned itself with the open and affirming principals of the denomination and presented that message to the Columbus community. Members of the LGBTQ community were not only welcomed to join as full members but encouraged to become active participants within the leadership of the church as well. The Black church is particularly known for its powerful preaching, and as the first female pastor, she did not disappoint. There was not a decrease in membership because of her presence and the churches decision to move from male to female leadership. She was a very strong leader and powerful preacher. For twenty-three years she faithfully served the congregation until her resignation.

Advent is a smaller congregation with a membership of eighty-nine individuals. The church is comprised of fifty-six females and twenty-one males. There is a total of twelve youth under the age of eighteen. Most of the congregation are employed and less than ten individuals are retired. Advent is a well-educated congregation. There is a recent graduate of a PhD program as well as PhD candidate from the same institution of higher learning. There are two college professors, and the current co-pastor recently received a Doctor of Ministry degree. There are several individuals who work in the upper echelons of financial and hospital administrations. The employment make-up among the

congregation is quite vast ranging from individuals who work in the healthcare sector, re-entry prison population, security, mental health, childcare, education, and addiction services. Salaries range on the lower end of thirty thousand to several hundred thousand dollars per year. As previously articulated, Advent UCC is primarily an African American congregation and is to open to all people regardless of race, gender, or sexuality.

Having a wide range of individuals with varying backgrounds has proven to be extremely beneficial. For example, a few years before the current pastoral leadership was allied to serve Advent there was a member who led considerable efforts to educate the congregation around mental health. Not only was there an effort made to educate the congregation, but outreach efforts were made to connect with and serve those individuals. This member was particularly passionate about the subject matter because not only did she work in the field; she received a mental health diagnosis in her youth. Empowering others through work and the church brought a very good partnership between both entities.

It is important to note that all of Advent's previous, with the exception of one, have served as bi-vocational ministers. Bi-vocational ministry occurs when the elected pastor serves the congregation on a part-time basis, while maintaining another form of employment as income. Bi-vocational ministry can bring a large degree of stress, particularly if the minister has a family. Previous leaders and members have shared that the stress of ministry has taken its toll on the leader and their families. Bi-vocational ministry is not the only stressor on the minister; however, leading any congregation on a

journey can bring a degree of stress and this has the potential to negatively affect the mental, physical, and spiritual health of the minister.

It is a common understanding that people deal with stress in a plethora of ways, and depending on the individual, those outlets can include positive or negative behaviors. Along the lines of negativity, individuals may sleep poorly, over-eat, become overly irritable and some may turn to inappropriate substances, such as smoking, drinking, or drugs. On the opposite end of the spectrum, however, there are healthier ways to deal with stress, such as counseling, exercise, quality time with family and friends, and rest, just to name a few. As it relates to Advent, previous leaders have handled stress from a combination of the two.

My wife and I have the awesome privilege to serve together in ministry as a husband-and-wife team and we have been actively serving the Advent congregation for two and a half years. My wife and I have been married for nineteen years and we have had the desire and calling to serve together from the beginning of our relationship. We felt God's leading to serve together in a pastoral context; however, we were unaware of how or when we would walk in a ministry context together. The genesis of our relationship began in a Baptist church and because of the denomination's view on women serving as pastors, we concluded that the Baptist church would not be open to a woman's approach. We were also aware that most churches either would not be open or able to afford bringing on two pastors simultaneously. We made several attempts to apply to churches, but to no avail. We, therefore, concluded and began to make plans to start our own ministry.

In our current context, when we arrived in February of 2018, there was an associate minister, who had been serving for a few years prior to our arrival, the music ministry had been functioning very well, and the foundational ministries, which includes Trustees, Church Council, Deacon Board were also operating relatively well. In essence, the church was in a holding pattern until a permanent pastor had been elected to serve. While the basic functions of the church were operating, the membership had decreased significantly over the years the church was without a pastor. In the height of the ministry, in terms of membership, Advent had seen a membership of about two hundred. By the time we came on as pastors in 2018, the membership had dwindled down to twenty-four faithful individuals. These faithful few people pulled their resources together and kept the church alive, even with surmounting bills, and two church floods.

For two and a half years my wife and I have served the Advent United Church of Christ and it has indeed been a blessing to both of our lives. To be invited into the sacred spaces and places in people's lives is an honor and a privilege. Advent UCC has embraced us, our family, our brand of ministry, and we are seeking to grow together. It has been a joy to meet and welcome, not only new members into the fold, but also former members who had left and transitioned back into the fold. It is an honor and privilege to serve Advent; however, as a bi-vocational pastor, it can be taxing on the mind, body, and spirit. I wrestle with the tension of where the ministry of the church currently is and where I desire for it to be. I see the potential of the people and hold that in tension with their limitations. There are times when I want more than I have, desire to do and give more than I can, and get discouraged when setbacks take place. It is during these times when I must take perspective. I am still new to the Advent community, and I must pace

myself for the long journey. I endeavor to remind myself of the words my pastor decades ago, “This is a marathon and not a sprint.”

Over the two and half years that I have been serving this community, I have often reflected upon my personal story and the story of Advent UCC. I have asked the question, “How do our stories line up together?” I grew up four minutes down the street from the church and have never stepped foot onto the property until I was invited to serve as a guest preacher in the May of 2018.

My personal story is as follows. Upon graduation from high school in June of 1996 I entered The Ohio State University. The Ohio State University is a wonderful school and people travel across the globe to attend this institution; however, it was not the school I wanted to attend. From the time I was in the eighth grade my dream school was Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. When I was in the eighth grade, the Morehouse College Glee Club came to Columbus, Ohio and performed at the St. Paul’s AME church. I was already singing in the Columbus Boys Choir and my father, who was the director, wanted to expose us as young men to this group of college students to an Historically Black College and University (HBCU). Prior to their arrival, I had never heard of a Glee Club or Morehouse College. When I witnessed these young men enter the sanctuary and mount the stage with dispatch, I was instantly impressed. When I saw the beautiful Black men and the music they produced, I said to myself, “I’m going to sing in that Glee Club, and I will be a Morehouse man.” I introduced myself to the director and he gave me his business card.

After that day in March of 1992, I learned of all the Morehouse Men who were already in my life. My pastor and his brothers were all graduates of Morehouse College.

My pediatrician, one of the premier African American doctors in the city of Columbus, was a Morehouse graduate. My neighbor across the street graduated with Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1948 from Morehouse College. My pastor would bring the Glee Club to the church, and I would have the opportunity to eat with the college students and further interact with them. Morehouse was my life in my mind; however, because of the chaos in my home, I was not focused in high school. I did not possess the necessary 3.0 grade point average (GPA) for acceptance, and as a result, I chose not to apply.

Instead, I applied and was accepted into The Ohio State University with a Biology/ Pre-Med major. As I progressed through each semester, I was not satisfied with my experience at this university. I wanted to be a Morehouse Man. After two years, I decided to apply and was able to transfer to Morehouse College. In the fall of 1997, I was blessed with the opportunity to fulfill my dream and become a man of Morehouse. I arrived on campus and needed to declare a new major. My desire to major in Biology/Pre-Med had left me and felt lost as to which direction to pursue. I solicited my father for advice, and while he did not tell me what I should major in, he did suggest that I major in my passion. This gave me the clearance that I needed to major in religion. Through much prayer during my first year, I also accepted my calling into ministry. While a student at Morehouse, I was elected to serve as Chaplain of the Morehouse College Glee Club and held the office of chaplain for consecutive four years. I would offer prayers before concerts, trips, and Bible studies. I served as a chapel assistant and was licensed to the preaching ministry in the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel in the beginning of my senior year.

During the latter part of my junior year and throughout the summer, I ferociously researched seminary institutions to attend Princeton Theological Seminary became my institution of choice. Through much prayer and planning, I applied to Princeton and was accepted. Upon graduation from Morehouse College, I transitioned to Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey to further prepare for the calling that God had placed on my life. I thoroughly enjoyed my experiences at the seminary. Classes, such as: biblical studies, church history, theology, preaching, and pastoral care cojoined with the caliber of professors, made Princeton all that I could ever hope for. While a student, I had the privilege of serving as an intern chaplain at a hospital in the city of Trenton. Serving in the hospital environment was vital to my overall development.

After graduation, I was privileged to serve as a Youth Pastor in Bridgeport, Connecticut for two years and after some time, my wife and kids transitioned back home to Columbus, Ohio. From August 2011 to October 2017, my wife and I were extremely blessed and privileged to serve as the pastor of Shaker Heights Community Church. Affectionately known as the church with the "Red Doors," my wife and I had grown to love the congregation and to see its vast potential amid the challenges that the church itself had faced.

One of the challenges this congregation had was with the music ministry. The church, several years prior, had a major split and the majority of membership left with the pastor. When my wife and I came on board we had to rebuild, and the music was a part of that rebuilding process. I have been blessed with the ability to sing and to lead God's people in worship; however, I am unable to play any musical instruments. The church did not have a church musician and we had to sing to instrumental music or 'tracks.' We put

together a small praise and worship team, and I lead the team each week. Every Sunday, I led three praise and worship selections along with two sermonic selections. I led the music ministry for the entire six and half years we pastored the congregation. I will admit in the beginning, this was a major struggle for me. I resented that I had to lead the music ministry and that we as a church did not have a musician to serve as I was serving. My resentment was borne out of a lack of exposure.

Throughout my life, with most of the churches I had been a part of, the 'mega church' model had become something I was accustomed to being a part of. The larger churches had more resources when it came to musicians and singers. In addition to the music ministry, I had never been exposed to a pastor leading worship through music. Due to my lack of exposure, I felt that the praise and worship ministry was the job of someone else. I held onto this resentment for many months. It had become a job to me and was not fulfilling. During this time, I recognized this was a major opportunity for growth on my end. I had to confront my own unresolved issues and mourn the loss of what I thought ministry was or was not supposed. This was a major change for me, and I grew significantly because there was an adjustment in my perspective. Eventually, the music and leading the ministry became my most heartfelt passion.

Our first church pastoring together was training ground and little did I know, Shaker Heights had prepared me for how I would serve in my current context, Advent United Church of Christ. My wife and I are privileged to serve this congregation and in addition to my pastoral responsibilities, I play a major role in leading the praise and worship team in this context as well. The responsibility is not solely my own as before, and that is with great joy.

Co-pastoring along with my wife, has been a significant formative experience for me. We have been married for nineteen years and over these years, we have come to see and acknowledge our different styles, not only as husband and wife, but also as pastors. Yes, two are better than one; however, my wife and I have two totally different ways of operating and we are continuing to evolve and learn how our different modes of being will complement one another instead of conflicting with one another. The first time we learned this lesson was in seminary. For example, when it came to sermon preparation, my wife and I realized that we cannot prepare together. My wife is very much a planner and a structured woman. I, on the other hand, am not. I appreciate and affirm who she is as a person and acknowledge how her process is very smooth. I recognize how her style and discipline would benefit me a great deal; however, her system conflicts with my default. My wife and I preach in a tag team format many Sundays, and it shocks some within the congregation to learn that we do not prepare or write together.

My wife and I come together to talk about the main idea of the sermon, and we then determine who will start and close the message. After those decisions have been made, each person prepares in a way that best suits that person. Of course, we consult with each other if there are any challenges with the text or we want to check in with each other, but for the most part, we prepare separately, and this works for us. We do not read what the other person will say before the preaching moment. One reason for this is because we want to hear the message for the first time and share in the experience along with the congregation. My wife and I say to each other all the time, “I want to get a word also.” My wife and I had to learn each other’s preaching style and flow with one another when we tag team. Over these past eight years that we have been serving together as

pastors, we have sought to create a seamless and polished experience for the congregation and for us as well. Flow is very important to us and even today, after each sermon, we always check in with each other to examine what went well and how can we improve. It is our desire to be creative and captivating as we present the word of God through real, relevant, and radical ministry.

While similar, my wife and I come to the table with different gifts and different passions. A recent intense passion of mine has come through the sphere of health and wellness. For about a decade, I have set out to increase my awareness in the areas of physical fitness and nutrition. These two areas are particularly important to me because my father died due to complications of diabetes and heart disease. I have attempted to change my lifestyle in order to become a healthier individual. Over this past decade, it has been a struggle to remain consistent regarding nutrition and exercise. In total transparency, I adopted an "I'll get to it" later mentality and this way of operating caught up with me in a most unfortunate and tragic way. It was a Thursday evening, around 7:30 p.m., November 14, 2019, a day that changed my life forever. Thursday night, while working out in a studio, I had a massive heart attack. This was totally unexpected, especially since I eat relatively well and exercise on a consistent basis. I am grateful, so grateful to be alive. If I were to describe the feeling, it was like my heart was set on fire, set ablaze, an intense unrelenting burning.

At the time, I was unaware that it was a heart attack. I thought it could have been severe heart burn. I wanted to go home to relax and be still. I now know that if I had gone home, I would have died. I am grateful to the Lord for sparing my life because my story could have ended very differently. I am grateful to my wife who did not heed my desire

to go home, but immediately took me to the hospital. I am grateful to my children, my mother, my brothers, and all who have been praying for me. I am grateful to my church, Advent UCC, who have been lifting me up as well. This journey has been quite challenging for me as it has required a major lifestyle change. This event has forced me to the table to maintain and intensify action regarding nutrition, exercise, and now an introduction into the world of taking medication.

Now more than ever, I must take personal responsibility for my health, which is inclusive of my physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. I am in the process of learning about nutrition and what foods may or may not be best for me. I am learning about the value of resting my body, mind, and spirit. Prior to the heart attack, I was very busy personally and with my children; however, life has had to change, and I am beginning to adopt to a new lifestyle.

Recently, I received an amazing opportunity to speak to a first-year class of medical students, an invitation given to me by my cardiologist. I am proud to say that he is an African American male physician and one of the top cardiologists in the state of Ohio. I was proud to share with my son how a Black man saved my life. During the question-and-answer segment, knowing that I was a pastor, a student inquired if I "blamed God for the heart attack." It was an interesting question because he introduced spirituality into the broader discussion. I informed the student that I did not "blame God" for my heart attack. In fact, I expressed to all the students that I am grateful to God that I am still alive and able to share my story. My interpretation of that moment, spiritually, was that I was given another opportunity to live and that it was my responsibility to encourage as many people as possible, especially in the African American community, to

take special note of their health and wellness. High blood pressure, for example, is a "silent killer," and it is my spiritual responsibility to equip and inform the community through the platform I have been given.

The topic that I intend to explore through my Doctor of Ministry project is a "Paradigm Shift: A Model for Clergy and Congregations to Partner and Adopt Holistic Approaches to Health and Wellness." In January of 2020, a South African pastor at the age of forty-two, died immediately after preaching in front of his congregation. It was later discovered that he had high blood pressure and diabetes. If one were to take a look at him externally, he did not look like someone who would have any physical ailments or internal health concerns. On the social media platform, YouTube, there is a clip featuring a preacher preaching to a sanctuary full of people. It was at the climax of his sermon and the people were standing on their feet with great exuberance. They were shouting and the clergy and others in the pulpit area were wrapped up in the moment as well giving each other "high fives." It was very noticeable to me that while the people were standing on their feet clapping and shouting, the preacher was seated in a chair preaching. The preacher was very overweight and appeared to be approximately over four hundred pounds. I am not providing a critique or judgement, but rather, an observation. I am in no position to judge anyone because I had a myocardial infarction, a heart attack. We as clergy, whether we are at a reasonably healthy weight or not, all of us need to be physically and mentally healthy and to commit to modeling responsible healthy behavior in front of the people we are privileged to serve.

Having a heart attack brought to my awareness the various blockages in my heart. My left coronary artery was eighty percent blocked and my right coronary artery was one

hundred percent blocked. The most consistent question raised by the medical professionals while I was in the hospital was, “Mr. Jones. Why are you here? You eat relatively well, and you exercise consistently…why are you here?” While in the hospital, it was largely concluded that my genetics played a major role in what took place; however, I still must take responsibility to limit any potential tragedies. I must make sure that I live in a way that is consistent with the reality that I have heart disease. I must be consistent with my medication, nutrition, rest, and exercise to lower my cholesterol and fat content. I must limit the amount of stress in my life and my response to chaotic situations. I must continue to learn the value in delegating responsibilities to others as well. Being a healthy individual will contribute to my overall quality of life and the people that I am connected.

Just as it is important for me as a father, husband, brother, and a son to be as healthy as possible, it is just as important for me to operate in optimal health as a pastor. As a shepherd who leads a flock, it is imperative to operate in optimal health. My pastor, Rev. Dr. Keith A. Troy, would share with those who serve in ministry under him, “Ministry is a marathon, not a sprint.” Ministry, in every form, involves the whole body, and to do the work of ministry over an extended period of time, the healthier we are as individuals, the more productive we can become.

In addition to serving in ministry over an extended period, a point I wish to emphasize, it is important, as shepherds, to model responsible healthy behavior in front of the congregation or the sheep. As shepherds, if we have a desire for the flock to be healthy, then we must embody health in front of them. The most effective way to preach

about health, in any form, is not from the pulpit but from one's lifestyle. It is analogous to the saying, "Preach what you Practice" vs. "Practice what you Preach."

In this project, it is important to note that health is not limited to the physical body. While the physical body is important, mental, and emotional health are just as important. Oftentimes, the work of ministry not only takes a physical toll on the body, but it also takes a mental and emotional toll as well. Stress can also affect our physical bodies and emotional wellbeing. Stress can cause further problems in our homes, work life, and ministry.

This project will also seek to challenge congregations to collectively adopt a more serious look at their lifestyles as well. Within almost all congregations, communal eating as a form of fellowship is very prevalent. Although communal eating may be prevalent, at least within many African American congregations, the typical menus that are served continue to promote unhealthy meals. Oftentimes, it is not the food itself, but how it is prepared has caused much harm to our bodies. Foods such as: fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, fried pork chops, green beans, salad, deserts, and sugary drinks are staple items within many homes and churches alike. These types of foods can be found across the country in many African American churches. Therefore, it is no surprise that the membership has a lot of the associated health challenges that come along with a poor diet and lack of exercise. Diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, high blood sugar, and a host of other problems are evident within congregations. The African American church is a microcosm of the African American community, and because this is the case, the African American church is guilty of furthering unhealthy behaviors that affect the entire African American community

I am curious, what if clergy and congregations partnered together to change the paradigm? What if clergy and congregations partnered together to live healthier lives? What if clergy and congregations partnered together to ensure that everyone within the congregation, including the pastor, had a doctor? What if clergy and congregations partnered together to change the culture, not only at the church, but also within the home? If the paradigm were shifted and clergy led the way, the congregation and community would be tremendously impacted.

I am very privileged to be enrolled into the doctoral studies program at United Theological Seminary. Through this project, I am seeking to learn how to become an expert in the field of health and wellness within the context of clergy and congregations. Because my personal health was affected, it is my desire to root this project with a sound contextual, biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundation. This Doctor of Ministry program will equip me with the tools necessary to research my project and communicate it in a way that would be palatable for the community.

To operate with integrity, I must be an embodiment of this project. For me to genuinely desire clergy and congregations to implement my research within their own lives, I must live this project out in my own life. It is inappropriate for me to ask of others what I am unwilling to ask of myself. I bring a set of ministerial skills and interests that will aide me in this much needed endeavor. For example, I have already shared with my congregation, not only my story, but with the church council specifically, the importance of implementing a culture change when it comes to communal eating. The last event, New Year's Eve, we had a potluck style meal and there was nothing on the menu that would have been appropriate for me to eat. A few of the members were concerned that

the “pastor didn’t have food to eat.” The chairwoman of the trustee board, Cynthia Figgins, approached me and said, “I’m sorry Pastor, I will personally make sure there is a healthier option for you.” I appreciated the concern; however, at the following church council meeting, I addressed the matter head on. I informed the council that it was pertinent for healthier options to be presented not just for me as the pastor, but for the entire congregation.

It was expressed during the meeting that a culture change is needed and would benefit all rather than the one. I do not believe in eliminating “choice,” for people; however, moving forward, if fried chicken is on the menu, baked chicken must also be presented. I took the initiative and started a small group of both clergy from other churches and some congregants within Advent as a test group designed to encourage participants to implement a long-term change in lifestyle, and as a result, weight loss has already been lost. One person even selected a physician before which he had none. I am very open with the men in our congregation, and openly discuss the physical and spiritual benefits to a lifestyle change. We are all on the journey together, and the Doctor of Ministry program will bring scholarship to my endeavors.

In conclusion, serving in congregational life has been a blessing and has simultaneously presented challenges as well. I have learned the value of building solid relationships within the congregation and in the community. I have learned and continue to learn that with my position comes a degree of influence, and the more I grow as a person, the greater impact I can potentially make as a leader within the congregation and community. For the past ten years I have served as a senior pastor over two congregations and have served in ministry in different capacities for the thirteen years prior to serving

as a senior pastor. Over the time spent serving in ministry from Ohio to New Jersey, to Connecticut, back to New Jersey and then to Ohio, I have seen members decline in their health across all ages. I have observed and participated in the visitation of the "sick and shut in" at private homes, nursing homes, and hospitals. As a part of the clergy, I have offered many prayers and sacraments to members and extended family. In a sense, this is to be expected and is commonplace within the life of any and every congregation. This reality is not only present purely among members, but clergy also are having to be visited by members and family due to unhealthy lifestyles.

Because this is a reality, unless there is a proactive approach in the realm of health and an intentional paradigm shift, more clergy and congregations will continue to suffer the unfortunate health risks associated with unhealthy behaviors. The time is now to change course. The time is now to not only focus on spiritual matters. The time is now to intentionally preach and teach messages on healthier ways of living and if acted upon, not only will the congregation benefit, but communities will benefit as well. Not only will communities' benefit, but generations to come will also receive that rich inheritance. Clergy and churches can move in any direction if they have a firm foundation to stand upon. Churches point to the Bible as that firm foundation for the Bible holds tremendous influence over the life of a believer. The Bible is full of examples and stories that point to health, wellness, and the physical body as a prized possession. In the next chapter, a close examination of a biblical text will be highlighted to target how the physical body is a prized possession.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Biblical authority is the foundation for the church. The objective of this chapter is to explore a biblical narrative that would support the argument that the Bible does in fact push a concept that we ought to live healthy lives and that the physical body ought to be appreciated, appropriately cared for, and treated with the utmost respect. All of us can experience the consequences when we do not treat our bodies well and we can all experience the tremendous benefits when we are good to our bodies. The purpose for this chapter is to support the theme of this doctoral project, which is a "Paradigm Shift: A Model for Clergy and Congregations to Partner and Adopt Holistic Approaches to Health and Wellness." The purpose for this chapter is also to support the research project that was implemented at Advent United Church of Christ in Columbus, Ohio. The research program was called the "Inside Out Health Initiative."

The Bible offers a plethora of biblical texts to choose from that advocate for health. Theses texts are both prevalent in the Old and New Testaments. The Apostle Paul's writings make up the majority of the New Testament as we have it in its current canonical form. Among the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, the Apostle Paul wrote two Epistles to the church in Corinth. In this biblical foundation chapter, several exegetical methods will be identified; however, this chapter will primarily follow one

approach. In addition to identifying the specific exegetical approach, the structure and flow for this exegesis writing will be identified. This exegetical chapter will be focused on First Corinthians chapter six, verses twelve through twenty. The Apostle Paul expresses his overall perspective over what is the appropriate usage of the body. It is my contention that the Apostle Paul holds the belief that the human body should be singularly engaged in a certain way, and if used out of this context, anything else would be deemed as inappropriate and a misuse of the body.

> All things are lawful for me," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body (1 Cor. 6:12-20).[1]

As it relates to the specific biblical passage, there are several themes that will be discussed. In the opening passage, the first theme to explore will be how the Apostle Paul seems to debunk or counter theories that were familiar to the people in Corinth. From here, he makes a transition into the second theme, which is fornication. Here we need to explore what is his understanding of fornication and what is the significance of it as it relates to believers in Jesus the Christ. The third and fourth theme that will be discussed

[1] Biblical citations within this document are from the New Revised Standard Version unless stated otherwise, 1 Cor. 6:12-20.

is his understanding of the body and what is its function. Throughout this passage, the Apostle Paul specifically refers to the body as a "Member of Christ" and as a "Temple."

Another theme to explore will be the idea on "oneness" or being "united." The Apostle Paul draws a very sharp distinction between being one in spirit with the Lord verses being one with another in the flesh. The final theme to be explored in this passage will consist of ownership. Paul raises an interesting concept over who owns the physical body that humanity possesses. Ownership suggests not only creation but purchasing a product of some sort. According to Michael J. Gorman, he identifies basic approaches to study biblical texts. "There are perhaps three basic approaches to exegesis today. We will call them synchronic, diachronic, and existential."[2] The exegetical approach this chapter will be following is the synchronic method. The synchronic approach was chosen, in comparison to the other legitimate approaches, because it closely examines the biblical text alone, in terms of the final form. This approach makes the necessary attempt to examine the text in its original context and how the people would read, experience, and interpret its overall meaning.

The structure and flow of the biblical foundation chapter will follow the system suggested by Michael J. Gorman, a process he outlines that will be helpful to the "reading and interpretation" of not just the biblical text itself, but also the content of this chapter.[3] The process, as he outlined, must first be understood in the context of interpretation. Using this outline provides the writer with an opportunity to provide sound biblical

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[2] Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 13.

[3] Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis,* 25.

interpretation based on the best information as possible, and the reader to comprehend the writer's way of thinking and conclusion.

It is important to note, that when it comes to interpretation and exegesis, each person brings his or her own experiences, history, and biases to the table. All of the experiences that we have gathered through life, we bring that to any and all tables. It informs how we think, make decisions, and ultimately our actions. The biblical narrative is another table that we bring our experiences and presuppositions. Gorman quotes Rudolf Bultmann, "there is no exegesis without presuppositions."[4]

The structure of the exegesis chapter will be as follows: "Survey/Introduction, Contextual Analysis/Historical and Literary Contexts, Formal Analysis/Form, Structure, and Movement, Detailed Analysis, Synthesis, Reflection."[5] Heeding to this process will contribute to a well-organized and structured approach to exegesis and the reader will be able to understand the perspective of the writer and hopefully have a deeper understanding of the biblical narrative being presented.

The Apostle Paul is the founder of the church in Corinth, which is articulated in the fifth book of the New Testament, Acts. A boundary has been established from the outset of the specific passage in the sixth chapter, where Paul begins to set up a difference between the traditional societal belief system and that of the system of God. The Apostle Paul is setting up a dynamic where the believers in the Lord Jesus must learn to separate themselves from the society in which they are living.

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[4] Rudolf Bultmann and Schubert M. Ogden, *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann* (New York, NY: Meridian Books, 1960), 342-351.

[5] Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, 29.

In keeping with the notion that there must be a separation between society's way of doing things and God's way of doing things, the Apostle Paul seeks to address the concept of sexual expression. He uses a term, fornication, and a definition will be given later. The Apostle Paul, based on the understanding that he has of a scriptural reference to Genesis, that if anyone engages in sex, he or she will unite and became one flesh with that person. The text in Genesis is in a context of marriage; however, the context of sexual expression in the Corinthian context is if one engages in sex with a prostitute. If one engages with a prostitute, that individual would become one flesh with that person. Uniting with a prostitute is problematic for the Apostle Paul because he sees the body as a member of Christ and humanity should unite with the Lord instead.

The body has value for Paul; therefore, the body is to be treated with high regard and respect. According to the Apostle Paul, the body is viewed as a temple. It is a building that houses the most precious gift of all, the Holy Spirit. Since the body is the temple that houses the Holy Spirit, just as a temple would be considered holy, the body itself would also be considered holy. It is imperative for the believer to recognize that because the body is holy, what one then does with the body is of utmost significance.

The body should be used to glorify God because of two fundamental reasons. The Holy Spirit was given by God to the person who believes in God, and as a result, special care should be given without uniting with anyone or anything that would be inappropriate. The second reason given in the text, is that humanity does not own the rights to its own body. According to the Apostle Paul, because humanity was in debt, it became necessary for humanity to be purchased by God with a price. The body is not its

own, or the body has no 'rights' to its own self; therefore, the only appropriate option on the table is to use the body to glorify God.

Contextual Analysis

It is important to note that throughout the Book of Corinthians, there are multiple indications that this was not the first official letter to this community. In fact, the Apostle Paul is responding to and addresses a plethora of concerns the people of Corinth have within their community. There had been a pattern of correspondence between the Apostle Paul and the Corinthian community, as is evidenced by (7:1; 8:1; 12:1). The Apostle Paul writes the letter from Ephesus as he recorded in 1 Corinthians 16:8,19 and it dates back between the years of fifty-two and fifty-five. Corinth was the capital of Achaia, which was a province that included most of what is now called Greece. Up until that point, Corinth had been a Roman colony for nearly a century.

So that we may have an appropriate context for the community to which the Apostle Paul is writing to, a closer examination into Corinth is needed. Rome had destroyed old Corinth in 146 BC under the leadership of "Roman general Mummius."[6] A little over one hundred years from that point, it was a Roman general and statesman, Julius Caesar's decree, around 44 BCE, that led to the re-founding of this city. The population of the city was very mixed and made up of free and slave persons. Roman veterans and freed slaves settled here, thus; Corinth's citizens were also Roman citizens. "Corinth was repopulated not by military veterans but by ex-slaves…evidence indicates that a mix of freed persons-former slaves- and traders became leaders in Corinth upon the

[6] Laura S. Nasrallah, "1 Corinthians," in *Fortress Commentary of the Bible: The New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 428.

founding of the new colony."[7] Corinth was a diverse community, not only in terms of slaves and freed persons, but also in thought. This was a community with many different political and religious differences as well. "Scholars have long characterized the Corinthians as Gnostics, libertines, Judaizers, and especially individualists, concerned about their private spiritual success rather than that of the community."[8]

The city of Corinth had quite the unpleasant reputation, particularly those on the outside and had a bias against freed slaves that then occupied the city. Roman patricians, or the nobility held a particular viewpoint of disdain and disgust towards such individuals or communities. "Some characterized the city as populated by 'a mass of good-for-nothing slaves.'"[9] In addition to a community largely made up of former slaves, it is very important to keep in mind that the Apostle Paul was writing largely to a Gentile population. All these factors are important to take into consideration as we seek to properly place this Epistle within its appropriate context. As the Apostle Paul makes attempts to address specific concerns, he understands that his response would be interpreted in a multiplicity of different ways due to his intended audience. "Instead, 1 Corinthians should be investigated as part of a larger correspondence, some of which is lost to us, that provides data about a community that included men and women, poor persons and those at or above subsistence level, slaves and freed-persons and free, who sometimes accepted and sometimes resisted Paul's characterizations of them."[10]

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[7] Nasrallah, "1 Corinthians," 429.

[8] Nasrallah, "1 Corinthians," 430.

[9] Nasrallah, "1 Corinthians," 429.

[10] Nasrallah, "1 Corinthians," 430.

In addition to a Gentile community, there was a growing Jewish population present within Corinth, and among those Jews who were present were in fact slaves. "Philo mentions Corinth as having a Jewish population and Josephus states that Vespasian sent six thousand Jews to Corinth to work as slaves in the canal across the Isthmus that Nero was attempting."[11] The overall purpose in writing this Epistle to the Corinthian community was to spread the message of Christ Jesus to a diverse group of believers. He writes to a spiritual community, but one of the questions that we must raise to ourselves is this, did the Corinthian community of believers identify themselves as the "church" in the same way as we in the twenty-first century would identify ourselves?

Oftentimes, modern day believers read the ancient texts of the Bible and with a casual assumption draw the conclusion that the two areas see themselves in analogous ways. One author pushes the idea that this could be further from the truth. Keep in mind, the church at Corinth was comprised of people who believed in Jesus Christ without a strong history of theological debates and pre-established doctrines to stand upon. This was a community, a gathering of believers, who were learning what it meant to be a follower of Jesus Christ. There was consistent correspondence with the Apostle Paul, as he was the one who established the church in Corinth.

Throughout this exegetical chapter, the "Church at Corinth," has been consistently referenced. The Greek word for church is, and a general understanding of how that community used and understood the word is appropriate before moving forward. Reading and interpreting through a twenty-first century lens onto a first century community without proper context, would be a gross misinterpretation of the text. There is

[11] Nasrallah, "1 Corinthians," 429.

scholarship purporting the notion that the understanding of the word, ekklēsia, should not be limited to a spiritual community, but could be broadened or expanded to a general community with varied interests. “Some have argued that ekklēsia signals the similarity of these earliest communities in Christ to so- called voluntary associations—guilds of people who gathered based on their employment (a guild of textile workers, for instance)—whose community together included worship of a god, meals, and often financial contributions.”[12]

The ekklēsia can be a term that embraces the multiplicity of offerings that any community can offer. No one community is any one thing. Every community is comprised of a plethora of things, and the ekklēsia should be viewed in this light as well. The Apostle Paul was writing to a community that fully embraced the various vicissitudes of life. For example, among the many usages of the term, ekklēsia, in addition to it referring to a spiritual community, ekklēsia, has strong ties to political dialogues within the city. “The term in the classical period had referred to the democratic assembly of the city, usually made up of free adult male citizens. At the time of Paul’s writings, political assemblies in Greek cities around the Roman Empire still bore the name ekklēsia, or in the singular, ekklēsia, and still met to engage in democratic deliberation about what was best for their cities.”[13]

The city of Corinth was a bustling place with non-monolithic communities as its make up. It is noteworthy that Corinth had developed into a thriving economy because it was well positioned for trade and wealth. Corinth quickly developed into a busy hub of

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[12] Nasrallah, “1 Corinthians,” 428.

[13] Nasrallah, “1 Corinthians,” 428.

east-west trade and eventually became the center of Roman imperial culture in Greece. The Apostle Paul set out on missionary journeys to spread the message of Jesus Christ and there were some communities that were open to his ministry, while many did not receive him well. In many places the Apostle Paul visited, he was met with violence or persecution; however, Corinth was not such a place. "The birth of the church also seems to have been unusually peaceful: Paul nowhere indicates any experience of harassment."[14] It was quite refreshing to live in a community with the awareness that the people would not intentionally cause bodily harm; however, this does not mean that he did not experience struggle and strife within the very ministry he was seeking to establish.

The Apostle Paul taught the gospel to this community, as at other times before and to different communities; however, in Corinth, not every believer believed or agreed on the same stances as the Apostle Paul had taken. Strong themes were persistent throughout the Apostle's message and there were some within the new believers who thought differently. "First, some of his own or subsequent converts were people of education and high social standing who developed independent views about the meaning of the Chris- tian message (e. g. in relation to the resurrection of the body and sexual behavior) and whose integration in Corinthian society made them reluctant to accept Paul's more sectarian social practices (e.g., in relation to sacrificial food)."[15]

It was these types of issues that the Apostle Paul encountered on a consistent basis, which further gives voice why there was consistent communication between the

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[14] John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., "1 Corinthians," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1109.

[15] Barton and Muddiman, "1 Corinthians," 1109.

two with the expressed intent on becoming better believers connected to Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul came down hard on key subjects and he addressed or responded to their concerns. The ekklēsia reached out to the Apostle Paul to clarify his position on certain matters. “It is possible to suggest some of the topics on which the Corinthians wrote to Paul: many may be introduced by the formula 'now concerning', which occurs not only in 7:1, but also in 7:25 (on the topic of virgins), 8:1 (on food offered to idols), 12:1 (on spiritual gifts), 16:1 (on the collection), and 16:12 on (Apollos).”[16]

As we read the Apostle’s writings, if there is anything that the text is tailored to teach us, is that it does not matter what community you are a part of, not everyone will agree with the positions or decisions that one will inevitably have to make. If there is not unified consensus on a particular matter, it ought not be surprising when there is disagreement and experience the opposite of unity. Placing oneself in the land of the biblical text would benefit the interpreter a great deal as he or she will have a broader and wholistic picture of the past and know how to interpret the text adequately and appropriately in the present.

The Apostle Paul, in founding of the ekklēsia, he had a significant hill to climb, in terms of making headway into how believers in Christ Jesus are to govern themselves in comparison to those outside of the spiritual community. He consistently had to battle against differing forms of prejudice and privilege within the ekklēsia. There were several different social divisions that he had to come against. “Recent scholarship has highlighted the importance of the social divisions in the church in Corinth and has posited the disproportionate influence of a small elite group within the church, whose attitude to their

[16] Barton and Muddiman, “1 Corinthians,” 1109.

social inferiors and whose class-determined interpretations of the Christian faith underlie many of the issues addressed in this letter."[17]

Another example of the social division within the elite group mentioned above had to deal with were "some members of education, power, or noble birth, and some named individuals seem to belong to such an upper stratum."[18] These feats were necessary to address for the overall wellbeing and health of the Corinthian community. The Apostle Paul understood the painstaking task of combing through such issues and was willing to fight the good fight over the long haul. "Paul attempts throughout the letter to puncture their pride and to redirect their sense of honor towards mutual service in the community."[19]

Formal Analysis

Casually reading a biblical text is common to whomever decides to read. If one takes the task to perform careful study of any text, special attention needs to be made as to the type of biblical text one is reading. To properly and appropriately interpret given text, one has to take into consideration that the books of the Bible were not only written from different perspectives, but they were written with different styles or genres as well. "The Bible is not, from one perspective, truly a single book; it is a library. The books of the Bible exist in many different genres (e.g., historical narratives; collections of hymns, proverbs, visions, and oracles, and letters…)."[20] In other words, it would be inappropriate

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[17] Barton and Muddiman, "1 Corinthians," 1109.

[18] Barton and Muddiman, "1 Corinthians," 1110.

[19] Barton and Muddiman, "1 Corinthians," 1110.

[20] Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, 85.

for a reader to approach a Psalm, which is more poetic in its context, as one would read an apocalyptic text, such as Revelation. In this section, a careful formal analysis will be presented on the 1 Corinthian 6:12-20 pericope.

The passage of scripture that this exegetical chapter will be based on is written in the literary form of prose. This passage, written by the Apostle Paul, was written as a letter to the ekklēsia in Corinth. It is important to note, that Gorman suggests that the exegete answer certain questions before proceeding forward. "If it is a speech or part of a letter, is the passage an argument? A definition? An explanation? Moral instruction? An apology (self-defense)? A prayer?"[21] In his letter to Corinth, the Apostle Paul makes an attempt to provide moral instruction to this community. The Apostle Paul was responding to several concerns the community had raised.

Below is an outline of the exegetical passage that will be examined. This outline is based on my summarization of the basic themes and movements of the text. In the detailed analysis portion of the chapter, the exegesis will be based on the following outline.

I. Traditional Maxims (vv. 12-13)
   a. Lawful but not Beneficial (v. 12)
   b. Destruction of Food and Body (v. 13a)

II. Bodily Usage (vv. 13b-14)
   a. Purpose for the Body (v.13b)
   b. God's Raising Power (v. 14)

III. Becoming One (vv. 15-17)

[21] Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, 86.

a. Body as member with Christ vs. Prostitute (v. 15)

b. United with someone = becoming one with them (vv. 16-17)

IV. Introduction of Sin and effects upon the Body (v. 18)

a. Effects Outside the body vs. Body itself (v. 18)

V. Body as location of Worship (vv. 19-20)

a. Body as Temple that holds Spirit and Ownership (v. 19)

b. Body purchased. Conclusion: Glorify with Body (v. 20)

The Apostle Paul uses specific language in this letter that identifies major themes. From the outset of the pericope, the Apostle Paul sets out to dispel many of the communities widely held beliefs. He repeatedly uses the term, body, and how it relates to a prostitute and a temple. The Apostle Paul also connects the usage of the body to major themes, such as unity, sin, ownership, and worship.

Detailed Analysis

Traditional Maxims (vv. 12-13)

We have reached a point in the chapter where it is now appropriate to exegete the biblical passage. Moving forward, the pericope that will be closely examined will be 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 and the outline in the previous section will be the structure that will be followed and scrutinized. In verse twelve through the beginning of verse thirteen, the Apostle Paul opens up this passage with sayings or traditional ‘maxims’ that are known and are accepted by the Corinthian community. A maxim is an expression of a general and agreed upon truth. It is a rule for good or sensible behavior. The maxims are easily

identified to the reader by the Apostle Paul, as he indicates each one through quotations. The Apostle Paul lists these maxims or truths, and then provides a counter to each one. (1) "'All things are lawful for me,' (1a) but not all things are beneficial. (1) 'All things are lawful for me,' (1b) but I will not be dominated by anything. (2) 'Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,' and (2b) God will destroy both one and the other.'"

In the first and repeated maxim, "All things are lawful for me," the question that must be raised is this, what does this statement mean? The Greek word used for 'lawful' means "it is permitted." The text then could read, "All things are permissible (lawful) for me…" How did the Corinthian community understand this maxim and why did the Apostle Paul communicate in this way? The Apostle Paul was writing to a community that embodied the idea of freedom from all things; thus, accountable to little or nothing. The Apostle Paul adopts these phrases and debunks them to prove a point. By adopting the vernacular of the day and inserting it into his moral instructional letter, he sought to connect their current lifestyle to that of following Jesus the Christ. There were those in the ekklēsia of Corinth that desired to maintain the freedom of their lifestyle while simultaneously believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. By inserting this maxim into this letter, it is evident that he planned on disputing their widely held beliefs. "…those espousing it in the Corinthian community apparently had failed to recognize the absolute claim of Jesus on the lives of his followers, as well as his servant ethos."[22]

It is important to recall, there were major concerns that needed the attention of the Apostle, and as Paul became aware of certain matters, he sought to address them one by

[22] Scott D. Mackie, "The Two Tables of the Law and Paul's Ethical Methodology in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 and 10:23-11:1," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly,* no. 75 (2013): 315.

one. Later in the passage, the Apostle Paul address the matter of sex, but prior to him doing so, he lays out a popular misconception about freedom. “Paul dialogues with and qualifies the bold assertion and then applies the now severely conditioned “freedom to do all things” to two pertinent issues: sex with prostitutes (6:13-20).”[23]

The Apostle Paul has a crystal-clear agenda in refuting the mentality of freedom without boundaries. The scripture says, “‘All things are lawful for me,’ but not all things are beneficial.” Recognizing that Corinth, at one time, had a population of enslaved peoples who are now walking in freedom, it is not his intent to quench or squash the freedom that one has as a human being. However, as one continues in their relationship with Christ, there are boundaries that a community must embrace and connect with the world. No freedom then is absolute, but freedom must be measured and interpreted through a particular lens. “Paul qualifies it twice in both 6:12 and 10:23, dialectically engaging the assertion of absolute freedom and passing all questionable behaviors through two interpretive “filters” that Christo-logically shape and conform that freedom, thus determining what is actually permissible.”[24]

It is clear with this maxim the Apostle Paul has presented, that he pushes back against the notion one cannot live without boundaries or rules, and this idea went against their fundamental core beliefs. “Yet they did not believe that it constituted a hindrance to his or her individual pursuit and enjoyment of “all things.” The people of Corinth, openly so, are trying to discover what it means to be, not only a believer in Jesus Christ, but a follower of Jesus as well. Paul contends that in this phrase, “All things are Lawful for

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[23] Mackie, “The Two Tables of the Law and Paul's Ethical Methodology,” 315.

[24] Mackie, “The Two Tables of the Law and Paul's Ethical Methodology,” 317.

me," they have yet to grapple with the notion that their identity has changed. Though they have the same biological names, same biological family, history, and employment, who they are as spiritual beings has now and forever changed. They are not who they used be, nor can they do as they used to do. They have a new identity in Christ, and this new identity places limits or boundaries where they were not previously. "But Paul thinks that they have failed to grasp the implications of that change of identity, in particular the limits it sets on the use of their bodies."[25]

The Apostle Paul recognizes that this community of believers are very limited in their understanding of the gospel, and while he provides a critique to their common beliefs, he does not refute their understanding in full. He provides a critique; he provides a little push back because one must keep in mind how their mentality will directly affect the entire community. "Paul does not reject it out of hand, but cautions lest its individualist emphasis ('all things are lawful for me') prove detrimental to the church as a whole: not all things are beneficial (i.e., to others)."[26] In his rebuttal, while the Corinthian community may lay claim to "all things are lawful for me," the Apostle Paul counters by exclaiming "but not all things are beneficial."

The word beneficial in Greek means to bring together, to be expedient, and or to be profitable. Verse twelve could logically be read in the following manner, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things bring together, are expedient, and or profitable." As a new identity emerges in Christ among the people, the Apostle Paul teaches them to be mindful of their behavior, because while one does have the ability to do whatever they

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[25] Barton and Muddiman, "1 Corinthians," 1117.

[26] Barton and Muddiman, "1 Corinthians," 1117.

desire, in the long run, not everything will be profitable, expedient, nor will in every circumstance, things will be brought together. In this instance, the Apostle Paul is challenging the ekklēsia of Corinth, to think about the choices they make and the consequences that may or may not come. He challenges the ekklēsia of Corinth, to not limit their focus to the individual, but rather to broaden their focus so that the community can benefit. He challenges the ekklēsia of Corinth to re-examine their core beliefs, particularly as believers in Jesus the Christ, because they will not reap the benefits from a totally 'free' lifestyle as they once thought they did.

Moving forward in verse twelve, the Apostle Paul restates the maxim, "All things are lawful for me…" but this time he adds a different rebuttal: "…but I will not be dominated by anything." The Greek word 'dominated,' means to exercise or wield power and or authority over. The text could read, "All things are lawful for me," but I will not allow anyone to exercise "wield power or authority over me." Once again, the Apostle Paul is writing to a community of former slaves, and out of curiosity does this phrasing carry a sense of familiarity with the people? The ekklēsia of Corinth had previous experience of what it meant to be dominated by the Roman authority.

The Apostle Paul was not only advocating that he would not put up with being dominated by anyone or anything but reinforced the notion that the ekklēsia of Corinth should not allow any kind of domination again, relative to one's relationship with Jesus the Christ. "Implicit throughout is the assumption that the Corinthian believers should not allow themselves to be dominated by anything or anyone, as dominion belongs to Jesus alone."[27] The ekklēsia of Corinth knew full well what it was like to be forced into manual

[27] Mackie, "The Two Tables of the Law and Paul's Ethical Methodology," 320.

labor for the benefit of someone else. If this phrasing did have a familiar impact upon the community, the Apostle Paul did not want them to fall in the same trap as before. "…with another qualifying filter: in 6:12… disallowing behaviors that place the Corinthians under the "domination/ dominion" of "anything."[28]

The Apostle Paul, in his admonition that he "would not be dominated by anything," he was also suggesting that the ekklēsia of Corinth, should not have to submit to any kind of domination from others outside the community or from within the community. No one desires to be dominated by anyone or anything; therefore, as one intentionally matures in their connection with and awareness of Jesus the Christ, behavior changes are in order. As they desire to live a lifestyle of freedom, the ekklēsia of Corinth must realize that the true freedom that one seeks after, ultimately is found in one's relationship with Jesus, the Christ.

The Apostle Paul addresses another maxim. As it pertains to food, this is not the only instance in his Epistle to the Corinthians where the subject of food and discipline comes into play. Verse thirteen says, "'Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,' and God will destroy both one and the other.'" As the Apostle Paul moves forward in the passage, in this maxim, he introduces three conceptions or ideas relationship, purpose, and divinity. These conceptions or ideas will be carried out in other themes throughout this passage. The relationship dynamic is a physiological one. He talks about the relationship between food and the stomach and the stomach for the food. Both are in relationship with the other. As it relates to purpose, the Apostle Paul discusses what is food designed for or where is the destination for food. Food is designed for the

[28] Mackie, "The Two Tables of the Law and Paul's Ethical Methodology," 319.

stomach's consumption, which in turn, will provide total nourishment for the body. He is suggesting how one cannot exist, in terms of purpose, without the other. It has even been suggested that the Apostle Paul, by introducing the subject matter on food in the sixth chapter, it was a set up for later chapters in the Epistle of Corinthians. "The reference to food anticipates the discussion of chapters 8—10, where Paul challenges the 'knowledgeable' who consider themselves immune to corruption by such a paltry phenomenon as food."[29]

After the Apostle Paul introduces relationship, and purpose, he then brings into the picture, divinity or God, who then has a corresponding action. God is translated as Theos, which can mean, the creator and owner of all things. According to the Apostle Paul, in an eschatological sense, God or Theos, enters onto the scene with a specific action…destruction. "…and God will destroy both one and the other." The Greek word used for, destroy, means to make completely inoperative or to put out of use. It means to abolish. For the Apostle Paul, the stomach and food, and vice versa, God will come and totally abolish, or make food and stomach completely inoperative. Both the stomach and food will be put of use. In this passage, at the first mention of deity, whom the Apostle Paul refers to as Theos, why is there is a direct link made to destruction?

Bodily Usage (vv. 13b-14)

In the continuation of the latter part of verse thirteen, the Apostle Paul again draws upon the same relationship between "food and the stomach and the stomach for food," but makes a sudden shift from food and inserts the subject fornication. The

[29] Barton and Muddiman, "1 Corinthians," 1118.

Apostle Paul reintroduces the three conceptions relationship, purpose, and divinity as it relates to the usage of the body and its overall purpose. “The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” The Apostle Paul, in the latter part of this verse, lays out his understanding of what an appropriate relationship looks like, as it relates to the body and sexual expression. He talks about the relationship between the “body and the Lord” and the “Lord and the body.” Both are in relationship with the other. According to the Apostle Paul, the body has a particular purpose or usage, and to use the body for any other reason would be inappropriate and a misuse of the body.

Writing to a sexually free society, the Apostle Paul writes, “The body is meant not for fornication.” The Apostle Paul explicitly states a spiritual principle that directly goes against their way of life and mentality. The Greek word used for body refers to the actual physical body of a human being. “The body' (soma) must here include the material/physical expression of ourselves.”[30] At times, it can also be used in reference to the body of Christ, but here, in this verse, the Apostle Paul specifically means the actual physical body of a human being. The physical body of a human being is not meant for fornication. For example, if a person used a knife to turn a screw. Without question the knife could be used in that way or serve in that function; however, that is not why the knife was created. The body is not meant for fornication.

What does fornication mean in this context? The Greek word used for fornication is derived from a meaning used to sell off one’s sexual purity. It is where we derive our English word, pornography, or pornographic. In general, fornication can mean illicit

[30] Barton and Muddiman, “1 Corinthians,” 1118.

sexual intercourse. Without getting into the weeds, who determines what constitutes fornication? Who determines illicit sexual intercourse? Is Paul's understanding all intercourse is illicit if it is engaged in a context outside of marriage? Is there room for sexual expression outside of the context of marriage in this chapter?

According to the Apostle Paul, he tells the ekklēsia of Corinth, that their physical bodies were not meant for fornication, sexual impurity, and or illicit sexual intercourse. "Porneia was used in the Jewish tradition to refer to any sexual activity judged immoral, but porneia could refer to anything he considered illicit."[31] Even though there would be mass disagreement, the terminology, particularly among the Jews in Corinth, would be familiar with these principles.

So, if the body was not meant for fornication, what then was the body meant for? This is the pivotal question, as this question begins to get to the heart of the Apostle Paul's theology "…but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." According to the Apostle Paul, there is an intimate spiritual reciprocal relationship between the body and the Lord. There is an intimate spiritual reciprocal relationship between humanity and divinity. The purpose of the body or the body is purely meant for who? Not oneself, but for the Lord. To say it another way, "The body is not meant for fornication, the body is meant for the Lord. The Lord is meant for the body" (1 Cor. 6:13). This is not a one-sided affair. For the Apostle Paul, fornication is an inappropriate usage of the body. The appropriate usage of the body then is for the Lord; and however, the Lord desires to use the body, the Lord can use the body according to the Lord's will. The next step in his

[31] Barton and Muddiman, "1 Corinthians," 1118.

thought, is simply, the Lord is meant for the body. This is the reciprocity and the substance of the relationship with Christ that the Apostle Paul was going after.

The Apostle Paul's theology when it comes to the body and its appropriate usage is very much closely intertwined with the Lord and what the Lord will do with humanity. "And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power (1 Cor. 6:14). The Apostle Paul makes another theological shift in the text. He departs from the subject matter of fornication and the relationship between the Lord and the physical body of humanity, but only for a moment. The Apostle Paul transitions to the idea or spiritual belief of 'Bodily Resurrection.' Not only does his statement address bodily resurrection, but he also speaks to the questions that have plagued humanity ever since the beginning of time: Is there life after death? Though the Apostle Paul does not use that particular word at this time in this letter to the Corinthians, he instead uses the word, raised. The Greek word means to waken, or to raise up. The Apostle Paul expresses a spiritual belief that God, Theos, performed the most impossible act by bringing someone back to life. He pushes the spiritual belief of resurrection, that God was the one who raised the Lord, implication is Jesus, or God woke up the Lord.

To most, if not all believers in Jesus the Christ, this brings a word of encouragement that there is life after death. To further illustrate the notion of resurrection and life after death, the Apostle Paul does not stop writing about how the Lord was raised by God, but that God "…will also raise us by his power." The Apostle Paul was communicating to the ekklēsia of Corinth, that as believers in the Lord Jesus the Christ, God was going to raise them as well, just as God did with the Lord. Notice how the Apostle Paul draws a sharp comparison between verse fourteen and the beginning part of

verse thirteen. Verses thirteen through fourteen says, ""Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power."

The Apostle Paul communicates to the ekklēsia of Corinth, that the God who has the power to destroy the body is the same God who has the power to raise the body. That is God is both, one who brings destruction and eternal life.

> What is the reader to make of the dissonance in the claims that God will destroy food and stomach but will raise believers just as he raised the Lord? It is as if two levels of consideration vie with one another. What is important in life? Not food and the stomach. Once again, then what is important? Answer: the close connection between the "body" and its Lord, the Lord whom God has raised from the dead and with whom believers have such an intimate bond.[32]

For the Apostle Paul, the Lord and the body are intimately connected. Since God raised the Lord from the dead, God will in turn raise the believers by God's power as well.

The word power used here in this context is an interesting one. The Greek word for power is where we derive our English word, dynamite. The general meaning of the word simply but powerfully means, the ability to perform. The Apostle Paul is expressing to the ekklēsia of Corinth, that God does in fact have the dynamite, the power, the ability to perform the impossible and that is to raise us back to life just as God had already done with the Lord.

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[32] J. Paul Sampley, *The New Interpreters Bible,* vol. 10 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 862.

Becoming One (vv. 15-17)

The physical body is very important to the Apostle Paul. The physical body is intimately connected to the divine when it comes to the Apostle Paul's theology. The Apostle Paul continues to thread the needle and slowly knit his point in the fabric of this passage by writing about a theme of unity with Christ or oneness with Christ. Verse fifteen says, "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!" First thing of note, from verses twelve to fourteen, the Apostle Paul makes emphatic statements of instruction. In verse fifteen, the Apostle Paul raises a question. The question could be centered around a lack of knowledge or serve as a reminder of who they are in Christ. The purpose of the question is designed for a pause on behavior with the hope of inward reflection. As one reflects spiritually and mentally, a change in behavior would be the best outcome.

The Apostle Paul raises a question but does not wait for a response from the community. Instead, the Apostle Paul answers the question that he just posed with a definite negative answer. "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!" The Apostle says, "Do you not know." The Greek word, to know, has a meaning of one seeing with physical eyes. The word also delves deeper as it pushes the believer to "mentally see." The Apostle Paul uses this work to dramatize a spiritual truth, that if one can 'know,' then they are able to not only see physically, but mentally and spiritual comprehend the present hour. The Apostle Paul is asking the ekklēsia of Corinth, "Do you not know, or see physically, mentally, spiritually what is at hand?"

The Apostle Paul is asking them to see their physical bodies through the lens of a spiritual intimate connection with Jesus the Christ. He is asking them to see their physical bodies, not as themselves, but as the actual bodies of Jesus the Christ. “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?” The Greek word for member carries of a bodily organ or a limb. For the Apostle Paul, the physical body is not unto itself. He attempts to convince the ekklēsia of Corinth that their physical body is the actual body of Jesus the Christ. Their body, their member or limb are the actual members or limbs of Jesus the Christ. He is raising the question to this community because in his theological understanding, their bodies are not their own, but that of the Christ. The Apostle Paul shares as much in the last verse of this passage.

The Apostle Paul continues on in this verse to raise another question that the ekklēsia of Corinth should already understand. “Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?” (1 Cor. 6:15). If one sees him or herself as the actual member of Christ, a question one could raise is, is it appropriate to use the physical body in such a way as to unite with a prostitute? A prostitute, or a harlot, is someone who uses their body, a form of sexual expression, in a manner to obtain economic gain. The Apostle Paul says, “Never” (1 Cor. 6:15). The Apostle Paul encourages this line of thinking.

“Throughout 1 Corinthians, the political force of the term sōma is deployed, as well as the frequent political rhetoric that the body should be unified. In Paul’s thought, the Corinthians’ bodies become members of, and come to constitute, the body of Christ and so should communally maintain the purity of their body.”[33] The ekklēsia of Corinth

[33] Nasrallah, “1 Corinthians,” 442.

should view themselves or their bodies as the actual member of Christ. With this mentality and way of operating, every activity that involves the physical body would be as if Christ were doing them himself. “On the contrary, they are 'members'—literally, limbs—of Christ so that the way we handle them inevitably draws Christ into our activities.”[34] The Apostle Paul is challenging the ekklēsia of Corinth to reorient or renew their minds into this new reality. This way of being would require a total shift in mindset in order to achieve a lifestyle change. “The man who has sex with a prostitute is, in Paul’s construction, Christ’s member entering the body of the prostitute. Because the prostitute . . . is not a person in her own right but a representative of the cosmos that is estranged and opposed to God and Christ, sexual relations with her involves Christ sexually penetrating the evil cosmos.”[35]

To present the message of Christ and the mentality that comes along with Christ’s way of being in relation to the physical body in such a drastic way, it is safe to say that the ekklēsia of Corinth, did not originally share in this belief. “It may help in following the various twists of his argument to understand that the Corinthians apparently view the body as belonging to a separate, inferior level of existence from the true self (soul or spirit), while Paul thinks in terms of embodied selves in virtual corporate relations with others.[36] The idea of their physical bodies becoming one with a prostitute or one with the Lord was a foreign concept. To push the envelope a little bit further, what does the Apostle Paul mean when he says, “make them members of a prostitute?” How does the

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[34] Barton and Muddiman, “1 Corinthians,” 1118.

[35] Mackie, “The Two Tables of the Law and Paul's Ethical Methodology,” 322.

[36] Richard A. Horsley, “1 Corinthians,” in *Abingdon New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 46.

Apostle Paul draw the theological conclusion that the spiritual body of Christ would become the member of the physical body of a prostitute? The Apostle Paul is speaking about oneness, unity, a joining together. Another question to pose to the Apostle Paul would be, where and when did the concern of a prostitute enter into the picture? Was this a previous concern from the ekklēsia at Corinth? Did the ekklēsia of Corinth communicate with the Apostle Paul about this specific issue in previous letters of communication?

The Apostle Paul gives a resounding no to the rhetorical question posed in verse fifteen. Similar to a prosecutor in a court of law trying to prove a point with a certain line of questioning, the Apostle Paul continues in a line of questioning of his own. In verse sixteen, not only does he raise a question, building upon verse fifteen and members of Christ joining together with a prostitute, but he also introduces Hebrew scripture as a theological platform to ground his belief. “Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, ‘The two shall be one flesh.’” (1 Cor. 6:16). The Greek word for ‘united’ literally implies to be glued together. It means to bond, cleave, to be adhered to something. It is a word that is used frequently in ancient medical language of the unite in of wounds. According to the Apostle Paul, whoever engages in fornication with a prostitute, becomes like a glue substance and the two separate bodies become one in substance. The physical act of sexual expression creates the oneness, a joining of two separate parties.

It is important to note, in the ideal scenario, this oneness or unity is solidified in a marital relationship. The Apostle Paul grounds his theological perspective in the Hebrew scripture taken from the Book of Genesis 2:24. The Apostle Paul does not quote the

scripture in its entirety, only emphasizing the latter part of the verse. “Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.” The larger principle or understanding is not limited to a prostitute. The prostitute is an example to push the overall point he is trying to make. If one engages in sexual intimacy, whether appropriate or inappropriate, those two individuals become like glue, adhere to one another and become one flesh. Therefore, it is preposterous that a believer in Christ, whose body is not his or her own, would unite, become like glue, and adhere to a prostitute, becoming one with her because that then would mean that Christ becomes one with a prostitute. That absolutely cannot be tolerated. “The physical joining in sex with a prostitute actually links Christ's body with that of a representative of sin—a union which Paul finds utterly scandalous.”[37]

Genesis sets the stage and is the starting point for the Apostle Paul’s theological understanding of what is the appropriate usage of the body in the context of sexual expression. To unite with another human being outside of the context of a marital relationship would be deemed inappropriate and a misuse of the physical body. Chapter seventeen lays out more of his understanding and the role of marriage verses singleness, but Genesis 2:24 is written in a context of marital intimacy between Adam and Eve.

Verse seventeen presents another shift in the text. The Apostle Paul transitions from becoming united with a prostitute to the believer uniting with and becoming one with the Lord. “But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him” (1 Cor. 6:17). “In the counterpart to "becomes one body with [the prostitute]" in verse sixteen,

[37] Barton and Muddiman, “1 Corinthians,” 1118.

Paul shifts the image to "becomes one spirit with [the Lord]" in verse 17."[38] The invitation the Apostle Paul has extended is not just to the ekklēsia of Corinth, but any and everyone who is a believer can take advantage of becoming one spirit with the Lord. It is interesting to note that the Apostle Paul does not identify the process of becoming one in spirit with the Lord. The Apostle Paul goes to great lengths in explaining how one's body, used in a context of fornication, would, in fact, create a fleshly union between Christ body and a prostitute, but he does not go into detail to advocate for the other.

For the Apostle Paul, this ought to be the goal for every believer in Christ. To live in such a way where every believer becomes one in spirit with the Lord. To embrace the mentality that their physical bodies ultimately are not their own, as he later writes, but understands that their bodies are the physical members or bodies of Christ himself and that every proceeding action would be as if Christ were doing the action himself. The Apostle Paul is an extreme advocate that if unity is enviable, as opposed to using one's body to unite with a prostitute or anyone else who is not one's spouse, one should then strive to live in such a way of becoming one with God is the goal, aim, and ambition.

In order to achieve this great feat and to position oneself to be united with the Lord in spirit, the Apostle Paul suggests that individuals who believe in the Lord should run for dear life from sexual immorality or fornication. "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body." The Greek word for 'flee,' carries a meaning escaping from something that is abhorrent. The believer is to avoid compromising situations at all costs. This is the price one must pay in order to be united with the Lord.

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[38] Horsley, "1 Corinthians," 46.

It is important to understand the Apostle Paul's reasoning behind such a demand or moral instruction. Every sin that a man or woman engages in would be considered an outside offense that has nothing to do with their physical body. For this particular indiscretion, which the Apostle Paul labels as a sin, fornication is a sin "against their own body." The source is not clear where the Apostle Paul is gleaning this information. The Apostle Paul does not provide any insights behind his claim, such as when he sourced from the Hebrew scripture in Genesis to back up is claim. Perhaps, the Apostle Paul was divinely inspired, and the Lord shared this information discreetly and personally.

Perhaps the Apostle Paul was aware of the cultural context of the community and borrowed phrasing he knew would be a widely accepted topic of discussion, as in another maxim mentioned earlier in the passage. "Every sin a person does is outside his body" (6:18*b*)–is widely recognized as being of Corinthian origin and as expressing the view of some in Corinth that, apart from *porneia*, every other sin is one that is "outside the body"–that is, no other sin is so directly related to the body as *porneia*, which always has some sense of sexual immorality."[39] Nevertheless, the sin of fornication is an offense against the body itself, particularly because the physical body is in fact the body of Christ. "Flee immorality' (v. 18; NRSV 'Shun fornication!'). It is not altogether clear why this sin is here taken to be uniquely 'against the body itself, but Paul may be hinting at the way in which sexual activity affects (and therefore potentially corrupts) the whole person at the deepest point of our identity."[40]

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[39] Sampley, *The New Interpreters Bible,* 863-864.

[40] Barton and Muddiman, "1 Corinthians," 1118.

The word sin is a strong word that produces a lot of feeling and emotion. The Greek word for 'sin' carries a meaning of missing the mark or making a mistake. An example of missing the mark would be like an archer who misses his or her target. Fornication, according to the Apostle Paul, is a unique and different kind of sin, and thus, must be treated differently than the others. "Though every sin that a person commits is outside the body," this sin is unique: it is "into one's own body" and it constitutes a singular instance wherein being "in Christ" is made manifest in a human body and tangibly connected to the physical realm."[41]

As the Apostle Paul wraps up this passage, he launches again into and poses rhetorical questions to the ekklēsia of Corinth. "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own…" (1 Cor. 6:19). With this question, the Apostle Paul makes an explicit statement furthering and delving deeper into the idea that our physical bodies are unique and set apart. In fact, he suggests that our physical bodies are sacred. They are in fact, temples.

It is widely known and established that temples are seen as spiritual houses of worship, independent of any faith tradition. The mention of the word, temple, would naturally conjure up such imagery in one's imagination. Why does the Apostle Paul compare the physical body to that of a temple? The Greek word for temple carries a meaning of a shrine, holy place, and a part of the temple where God resides. It means to dwell, analogous to a sanctuary or a divine dwelling place. The Apostle Paul's usage of

[41] Mackie, "The Two Tables of the Law and Paul's Ethical Methodology," 322.

the word could also refer to the most holy place within the temple itself, as in a traditional Jewish temple or sanctuary.

In verse nineteen, the Apostle Paul is asking a rhetorical question about sight and are they able to see or comprehend the magnitude of the situation. The ekklēsia of Corinth needed to digest that their bodies are actual temples, which house the Holy Spirit. This in and of itself is a remarkable statement because the belief has been that the God's spirit dwells within the physical temple made up of brick and mortar. The Apostle Paul is suggesting that the Holy Spirit is no longer dwelling in a physical temple made up of brick and mortar, but rather and instead, the Holy Spirit now dwells within another kind of physical temple, made up of human flesh. At the suggestion that the physical body of a human being is a temple, it is reasonable to conclude that the Apostle Paul desires for the ekklēsia of Corinth to embrace the idea that their bodies are holy and a sacred space. "There is an argument underlining the significance of the body for a believer. The body is indwelt by the Spirit of God, and thus has the sanctity of a temple."[42]

Therefore, the physical body holds such great significance and the usage of the body to fornicate is completely inappropriate. The idea here is as one is inappropriate with their physical body, then the spiritual temple is harmed in the process as well. The Apostle Paul does briefly mention this idea earlier in the Epistle of chapter three and he flushes this way of thinking out more in this specific passage of scripture.

> The initial statement, 'Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?' essentially repeats a claim made in 1 Corinthians 3:16: 'Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?' In addition to recalling ancient Jewish traditions concerning God's presence in the tabernacle (Exodus 33:9; 40:34-38) and temple (1 Kings 8), this statement implicitly maintains the entire passage's emphasis on the import and consequence of the believer's embodied existence: since the human body is

[42] Barton and Muddiman, "1 Corinthians," 1118.

> the site of God's "tabernacling" presence, violating one's body represents a violation of God's temple.[43]

The seriousness of the offense in fornication is found in the latter part of the above quote. "Violating one's body represents a violation of God's temple." The Holy Spirt now dwells in the physical body of the human being, and the Holy Spirit that the physical body now hosts, has been given by God. God is the only one who has the power or ability to bequeath God's spirit to wherever and whomever God chooses. As believers in Christ, God chose to give the Holy Spirt and dwell in their physical body, which is now considered to be a temple.

The Apostle Paul goes on to say in the latter part of verse nineteen and twenty "…and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body." The Apostle Paul expressed to the ekklēsia of Corinth, a community of freed slaves, that their bodies "are not their own." The community of believers, according to the Apostle Paul, do not belong to themselves and are not free to make their own decisions about their physical bodies. The Apostle Paul raises an issue of ownership, and who then has the rights over one's own body? "Believers come under an ownership: like slaves bought at a market, they are answerable in totality to a master, and that includes their bodies (slaves were sometimes known simply as 'bodies.')"[44]

Does the individual or the creator own the rights to the physical body? The Apostle Paul continues to use similar language that the ekklēsia of Corinth would identify with, whether positively or negatively, that their person has been purchased with a price. The impact of such statements could be viewed in either light; however, it is his intent for

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[43] Mackie, "The Two Tables of the Law and Paul's Ethical Methodology," 323.

[44] Barton and Muddiman, "1 Corinthians," 1118.

the impact to be viewed as positive. “The imagery of slavery comes to the fore at the passage’s close, as the negative prohibitions are replaced by a positive, exhibitive exhortation: “You are not your own. For you were bought [ἀγοράζω] with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body.”[45]

To clear up who owns the physical body and to whom does one belong, the Apostle Paul emphasizes that humanity belongs, not to a person, but to God. The Greek word for, therefore, carries a meaning of urgency and should be adhered to in the present. It is a clause that expresses demand or obedience in the immediate. “Therefore, glorify God in your body.” With our physical bodies, the ekklēsia of Corinth are to embody what it means to live out one’s life as if Christ were living through them. This is the epitome of glorification. “The latter statement makes explicit the entire passage’s unspoken expectation that allegiance to God and God’s Son should be expressed in an embodied manner, within the life of the community. It encourages embodied actions that benefit God and Jesus. The community will benefit as well from this unified and unifying focus on glorifying God “in Christ.”[46] The Greek word, glorify, ultimately means to value God for who God is. It means to recognize the real substance of God. For the Apostle Paul, this should be our lived experience. As the believer in Christ lives, he or she should live as if Christ himself were living in and through him. This is how we glorify God.

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[45] Mackie, “The Two Tables of the Law and Paul's Ethical Methodology,” 323.

[46] Mackie, “The Two Tables of the Law and Paul's Ethical Methodology,” 223.

Synthesis

Exegesis has been referred to more as an art than a science. In this section, the purpose is to integrate what has been discussed before and to attempt to see the larger picture rather than to continue to dissect the text piece by piece. The Apostle Paul wrote an Epistle to the ekklēsia of Corinth, a letter that consisted of moral instruction. The Apostle Paul has a definite agenda and desires a particular outcome. He is explicitly making a "theological and spiritual claim that is intended not merely to inform but also to transform the reader."[47] Here are some key words in this passage that are repeated and evolve into major themes within this text: body, fornication, Lord, God, members, Christ, prostitute, united, one, sin, and temple.

In this passage, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, the Apostle Paul makes a clear argument that our physical bodies are unique. They are set apart and should be viewed as temples that house the Holy Spirit. It is because of this reality, for the Apostle Paul, to use the physical body in any way other than its designed purpose, this would be inappropriate, and a change of direction would need to be considered. The specific charge that the Apostle Paul made against the ekklesia of Corinth was that they were using their physical bodies to engage in fornication, specifically with a prostitute. This was considered a different type of sin because it would charge against the physical body itself. When one engages in sexual expression, fornication, with a prostitute, he or she would unite and become one with this individual. This would be considered preposterous or an abomination because, for the Apostle Paul, the physical body is the actual body of Christ.

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[47] Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, 128.

When an individual engages in fornication, if there was an awareness that their bodies were the actual bodies or members of Christ, that individual would become one flesh with that person, and for the Apostle Paul, this would be highly inappropriate. Since this type of behavior would be the result, the Apostle Paul admonishes the ekklēsia of Corinth to flee or run as fast as they could away from putting themselves in that kind of position. The physical body of a human being is unique and special.

It is also important to note that the Apostle Paul uses language that the people would readily identify. Since this was a community of former slaves, the Apostle Paul expresses to them in this letter, that God has purchased their bodies and their entire person. They no longer must submit to the desires of 'man,' but now that submission must be to God, to whom they are now devoting their lives.

Reflection

The Bible has been subject to judgements, criticisms, and an array of interpretations ever since it was collected together as a document. In addition to the judgements, criticisms, and interpretations, millions of people across culture, gender, age, sexuality, ethnicities have used the Bible as a genuine source of faith, hope, and direction. My particular and initial approach to the 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 passage has been one of a hermeneutic of consent or trust. "A hermeneutic of consent or trust is the interpretive framework within which most practicing Jews and Christians generally read the Bible. They give the Bible the benefit of the doubt and conclude that because the people of God known as Jews and Christians have heard 'the word of the Lord' in the Bible for

thousands of years, they also may still. Hear from God through this book."[48] This approach has been my mindset throughout the study while at the same time, attempting to be critical and raise or explore controversial themes in the text.

This exegetical chapter has placed a spotlight on the Apostle Paul and how he expressed his perspective over what is the appropriate usage of the body. It was my contention that the Apostle Paul held the belief that the human body should be singularly engaged in a certain way, and if used out of this context, anything else would be deemed as inappropriate and a misuse of the body. It has been my attempt to draw that out within the passage; however, what was also able to be concluded, is that the Apostle Paul had a very conservative, limited, and 'strict' view of the physical body. He views his body, as evidenced throughout many of his other epistles, as the actual body of Christ. The sufferings that Christ experienced, if he were to experience the same, he would consider this to be something of note and aspirational.

Adopting the language and maxims of the culture, the Apostle Paul shared how God overrules everything, including their own physical bodies. It is a wonder how the ekklēsia of Corinth received the news that their bodies are not theirs. Yes, they were purchased with a price and God 'owns' them, but would such terminology resonate with them or be repulsive. This is my twenty-first century perspective reading into the text, but the ideas of ownership, being purchased, or not having rites over one's own body is an interesting idea to former slaves.

This text has also left me with other questions, such as: how are we to utilize this passage in the twenty-first century? This was a letter written to a particular people that

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[48] Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, 143.

addressed concerns raised by a particular community. The Apostle Paul did not have an awareness that this writing would be collected and bound together for centuries to come and to be interpreted by both Eastern and Western cultures. This text continues to leave much to explore.

The Apostle Paul made the case that the body is to be a prized possession because it houses the Holy Spirit and as such, our bodies are the temple of God. Since our bodies are the temple of God, how we treat them moving forward is important. Since our bodies are the temple of God, we treat them the best way possible and live as healthy as we can. In addition to examining a biblical passage, it is important to also see how history plays a role in pushing the theme forward as well. The next chapter will focus on a historical figure that if mindful, each of us can glean a lot of life lessons from.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Historical events and figures are ways we can investigate the past so that we can glean insights for the present and hopefully to build a better future. Whatever the subject, although nuanced in the present, one can consistently find events or figures in the past who have wrestled with similar ideas and concepts. Jonathan Edwards is such a historical figure. Through the lens of history, the purpose for this chapter is to support the theme of this doctoral project, which is a "Paradigm Shift: A Model for Clergy and Congregations to Partner and Adopt Holistic Approaches to Health and Wellness." The purpose for this chapter is also to support the research project that was implemented at Advent United Church of Christ in Columbus, Ohio. The research program was called the "Inside Out Health Initiative."

Jonathan Edwards was one of the most prolific thinkers, writers, and producers of scholarship in the early eighteenth century. He was an American revivalist preacher, philosopher, and congregationalist protestant theologian. Edwards is widely regarded as one of America's most important and original philosophical theologians of his time even into the present. History has landed him firmly rooted in the eighteenth century as one the pioneers for the revival in the English colonies known as the Great Awakening. The Great Awakening was a religious revival during the 1730s and 1740s that made a huge

impact on the community. It was a movement that spread to counter the idea that religion was no longer vibrant, and people lost their passion for God. The Great Awakening renewed and challenged people to return to God, at all costs. and not to be conformed to this world.

Not only was he known for being a central figure in the Great Awakening, but as a fiery preacher, Jonathan Edwards sermon, “Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God,” has been heralded as one of his greatest sermons. In this sermon, Jonathan Edwards attempted to warn and challenge sinners to turn back to God and repent of their ways or suffer the real consequences of Hell and damnation from God forever. What distinguishes Jonathan Edwards from many was that he embodied the ideals that he preached to the churches he was privileged to pastor. He made it his daily practice to “preach what he practiced,” as opposed to some who “practice what they preached.” The difference being Jonathan Edwards expressed to the people spiritual principles that he was consistently incorporating in his own life and that of his family. Jonathan was living a life that was committed to God, independent of him being a pastor and theologian.

He had an intimate and personal relationship with God, and because of this reality, it drove him to drive full speed in everything he put his hand to do. Jonathan Edwards grew up in a religious household and various people had specific influences on him that made a specific mark that would not go away. In turn, he was committed to raise his family in a religious household as well and expose his children to the riches of spirituality and all that life could possibly offer.

This historical foundation chapter will focus a spotlight on several aspects of Jonathan Edwards’ life. In no way shape or form will there be an attempt to cover the

vast number of contributions he has made to religious life. Jonathan Edwards has made his mark in history and time would run out. My primary focus will be on snippets of his life and highlight certain realities that are relevant to modern times. There are significant life lessons that any one person can glean from and be inspired by. He is an inspirational and aspirational figure. This chapter is structured and will be broken down into three parts: personal, professional, and paradigm. My agenda in the first part category, personal, is to highlight his family of origin. Focusing on his family of origin provides a context into the developmental stages into manhood. By looking at his parents and siblings and how they influenced his thinking gives us insight as to why he made certain kinds of decisions that was for his betterment and at times downfall. The second category, professional, will not cover the institutions he taught in or the various churches he pastored. The focus will be more specific by providing an example of a singular theological perspective and its application towards the wider community of New England he was privileged to serve.

Finally, the third category, paradigm, will focus on why he adopted ideas that caused conflict within his immediate family and how it affected his personal health. The goal in this section is to create dialogue of people having a paradigm shift. Understanding that a paradigm is an accepted way of thinking that we often inherit from previous generations or society and incorporate them into our lives, one does not have to accept such practices and can make a shift in perspective.

Personal Family Life

To understand the life of any individual and the perspective of how they came to be who they are, it is imperative to examine one's family of origin. For any person growing up in the world past, present, and future, understanding the family dynamic helps to paint a more accurate depiction of someone. It is in the family of origin where values and discipline will be established. It is in the family of origin where one is able to learn about culture and how one should navigate and make solid decisions through life. This is true as it pertains to Jonathan Edwards and the significant person he became. Jonathan Edwards was born in East Windsor, Connecticut in the early eighteenth century, 1703.

Jonathan Edwards is well known for being a clergyman, pastor, philosopher, theologian, and a host of other things. When it comes to understanding family of origin, Jonathan Edwards, a minister of the Gospel, joins the ranks of his previous generation who served as clergy as well. In fact, the woman he eventually married, came from a respected clergy family. Young Jonathan grew up in perilous times where there was significant fighting and wars. The Deerfield Massacre in 1704, for example, touched his family personally. The war was between the indigenous people of the land, more traditionally and inaccurately named, Indians, and the New Englanders. Jonathan Edward's father, Rev. Timothy Edwards, left his family for a short while, to participate and serve as a chaplain during this time. "Queen Anne's War (which lasted until 1713) touched the Edwards family directly and almost disastrously. In summer of 1711, when

Johnathan was in his eighth year, his father, the Reverend Timothy Edwards, set out from home to serve as a chaplain for a colonial military expedition against Canada."[1]

Reverenced Timothy Edwards served for a short time as a chaplain because he fell ill and was unable to complete his time of service. "Almost immediately he fell ill with a nervous stomach…By the time the army reached its staging ground in Albany, he was too ill to go on and feared he might die. Eventually he was shipped by wagon back to East Windsor where he soon recovered."[2] It is important to note that young Jonathan was quite an astute observer of his father and this way of living or being devoted to the Lord made an impression on him. His father served mightily in the New England area at a church and Jonathan learned from his father's leadership or witness. Like father like son, young Jonathan, under the mentorship of his father, closely modeled his life after his father's life. "The son was precocious and eventually outshone his father, but his achievements were also a tribute to the father's careful tutelage and continuing looming influence."[3]

The influence of his father did not cease just because Reverend Timothy Edwards served as a chaplain in war. In fact, the opposite is true. Reverend Edwards, during the time away, would write letters to the family and provided fatherly instruction to the entire family. "The first of these letters, written to his wife, Esther, within a week of leaving home, is filled with admonitions."[4] Reverend Edwards kept strict control over his family,

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[1] George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 16.

[2] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 16.

[3] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 16.

[4] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 16.

and this was the tradition and model of manhood that young Jonathan was exposed to as a child. He learned from an early age the cultural role of women in the household and in society. As a young child, he grew to accept and embrace that men had a patriarchal role in the family and society and women had a role in the family and society as well. Jonathan grew up in a household where he was surrounded by women. "The scene that this letter depicts reminds us also that, while Timothy Edwards was unquestionably the head of the household, Jonathan was growing up in a home that was, practically speaking, a world of women."[5] In total, Jonathan had ten sisters, four older and six younger. While he was surrounded by women, as he became older, deference was given to him because he was male. "…we can be sure that as the family's only boy in a culture where males had many prerogatives, he was doted over and soon deferred to."[6]

Jonathan Edwards was quite close to his sisters, and while culturally speaking, receiving a college education was reserved for men, Reverend Timothy Edwards ensured that all his children learned a plethora of different subjects including languages. Jonathan Edwards has been lauded for his strength, tenacity, intelligence, and demeanor. While those are good qualities to embody, many of those attributes were inherited and learned from his mother, Esther Stoddard Edwards. Mrs. Edwards embodied the characteristics of fortitude and grace simultaneously. "East Windsor villagers remembered her as 'tall, dignified and commanding in appearance' yet 'affable and gentle in her manners' and as of impressive intelligence, learning, and theological acumen.'"[7] Esther Edwards was able

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[5] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 18.

[6] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 19.

[7] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 19.

to strike a healthy balance between embracing traditional patriarchal beliefs and accept her role as a subordinate in the society she lived in; yet, she was a woman of extreme intelligence and when able, was more than willing to impart wisdom to those who were open to receiving it. “Until she was in her nineties, women of East Windsor regularly came to afternoon sessions in the old parlor – school room for readings of the Bible and theological writers punctuated by her acute commentary.”[8]

While Jonathan Edwards grew up in a predominantly female household and his mother held a strong influence in his life, young Jonathan greatly identified with and patterned his lifestyle after his father. Jonathan grew up in a religious puritan household and his father was the head in the family. Multiple times throughout each day, his family would gather for prayer and fellowship. His father was very firm and an ardent disciplinarian. As Jonathan continued to age, his father’s characteristics eventually evolved into his own. “Jonathan Edwards never entirely escaped the hold this demanding, yet affectionate father had over him. He followed closely in his father’s footsteps and, except for greater reserve, closely resembled his father in standards and attitudes.”[9]

There have been many positive and substantial influences on Jonathan Edwards life as a child and as a young man. His father and mother played a pivotal role in his upbringing and having ten sisters inevitably shaped his view of women in the world as well. Jonathan grew up in a world where religion and spirituality were prized as a value and commodity; therefore, it would be reasonable or plausible to conclude that when Jonathan came of age to seek out a romantic relationship, finding and courting someone

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[8] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 19.

[9] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 22.

would be a major criterion for meaningful connection and relationship. “In 1719, around the age of sixteen, Jonathan moved to New Haven, Connecticut. As a student at Yale College, eventually he connected with a local church and met a young woman by the name of Sarah Pierpont.”[10]

Jonathan Edward’s father was connected to the Pierpont family, and this made innocent relationship building between the Edwards and Pierpont family. The Pierpont family, particularly Sarah’s mother, came from one of the most significant religious families in all of Connecticut. With the spiritual connection, between these two families, Jonathan felt more relaxed and had a personal or spiritual investment in whatever potential relationship could come. “Sarah’s mother, Mary Hooker Pierpont, came from one of the most distinguished ministerial families in Connecticut and was the granddaughter of the renowned founder of Hartford, Thomas Hooker.”[11]

As Jonathan began to pursue his interest in Sarah, artistic expression came out in abundance. Jonathan was gifted in poetry and in music, and he used these attributes to appeal to her. “What we do know is that he wrote prose poem about her. Though the original is now lost, it is supposed to have been written in 1723 on a blank endpaper of a book he presented to her.”[12] Music was something that they both shared and had a significant passion. This was another confirmation for Jonathan that they were meant for another. “Jonathan and Sarah both loved to sing, and Jonathan wrote music pointed especially well toward the coming perfections of a universe of harmonious relationships.

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[10] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 93.

[11] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 93.

[12] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 93.

Music, he believed, was the highest way of communicating among persons."[13] In Sarah, not only was she the apple of his eye, but she also represented the epitome of a spiritual woman. She challenged him to be and aspire to become his best self. Spirituality, again, was something that he prized above all things. "Sarah was the perfectly embodied ideal of all that he aspired to be, the pure spiritual being, sweet tempered, singing sweetly, always full of joy and pleasure…Jonathan was sure that in Sarah he had found a kindred spirit."[14]

By the time Jonathan Edwards began to pursue Sarah Pierpont, she was only thirteen years old; and Jonathan was twenty. Their relationship began to grow and two years later, Jonathan proposed by asking for her hand in marriage. "By the spring of 1725 their relationship had blossomed into a suit for her hand. Sarah was still only fifteen but by May or June they were engaged to be married."[15] Jonathan and Sarah were finally married two years later in 1727. They were not married long before their first daughter, Sarah, was born. Family was very important to Jonathan and perhaps because he was accustomed to a plethora of siblings growing up, Jonathan and Sarah, likewise affirmed and repeated such behavior. "Through the 1730's she was pregnant with great regularity every two years, so that by the end of the decade they had seven children, six girls and a boy."

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[13] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 106.

[14] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 94.

[15] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 105.

Professional Life

It goes without saying that Jonathan Edwards was a deeply spiritual man. Jonathan Edwards grew up all around spirituality and totally embraced and incorporated faith in his life. The overall objective and intent of faith is to improve the quality of life for all of humanity. A faith that is properly focused, presents a vision, and challenges the people to be their best in all situations, this will in fact attract multitudes of people just as Jesus did when he walked the earth. A faith that does not offer these attributes will inevitably have the reverse effect upon any community. "A religion which serves only to supply individual psychological satisfactions or finds its sole goal in urging people to do right or promotes servile conformity to existing cultural values soon exhaust the patience of its adherents and weakly succumbs to tedium."[16] This is what faith is all about and speaks to why Jonathan Edwards devoted his entire life to this end. He sought to challenge and provide the people with a vision to aspire. "When there is no vision of something greater than the self and society to lure men beyond the confines of the solitary self or the amenities of society, the prophetic thrust of religion is lost."[17]

The image and reputation of Jonathan Edwards professional ministerial life has been established and set-in stone by many throughout the ages. He was a man who truly embodied the ideals he held dear and was focused singularly on God. "James Carse abandoned the possibility of knowing the 'real Edwards' and settled for a portrait of a hero whose aim was to make God 'visible' in this world."[18] "Elmwood has well said that

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[16] Clyde A. Holbrook, *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: Morality and Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1973), 185.

[17] Holbrook, *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards,* 185.

[18] Holbrook, *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards,* 1.

Edwards was 'a man of one idea, and that one idea was God.'"[19] Jonathan Edwards was one of the premier thinkers of his time and that which distinguished him from others, was his uncanny ability to apply excellence across disciplines. "While conceding Edwards's genius and confirming his standing as America's first great philosopher…as America's foremost evangelical theologian…"[20] As an ardent thinker in philosophy and religion, Jonathan Edwards perceived his mind as something that should be totally devoted to God.

The professional ministry of Jonathan Edwards is vast and the focus moving forward will be to his theological perspective on 'covenant.' Jonathan Edwards grew up in the Puritan faith and continued to walk under these beliefs as an adult. "Edwards absorbed the logic and terminology of federal covenants from an early age, when he sat under the ministry of his father, Timothy Edwards."[21] Puritans were a community, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of English protestant who sought to reform the church. Puritans believed that the same God who had established a covenant with Israel, is the same God who has established a covenant with this English community in New England. It was their desire to reform the Anglican church and to set an example in word and deed.

As a Puritan theologian, Jonathan Edwards very much believed in and advocated for covenantal theology. "Throughout his career as pastor and teacher he adhered exactly to the logic and tenets of the national covenant and reiterated them in exactly the same

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[19] Holbrook, *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards,* 2.

[20] Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout, *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), 143.

[21] Hatch and Stout, *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience,* 144.

terms as did his predecessors in the New England pulpit."[22] Covenantal theology would be on full display due to the fact that there was a "Great Earthquake" in New England in November of 1727. This earthquake was so devastating that it struck fear in the hearts of the people and caused a rush to return to the Lord. It was not just the shock of experiencing an earthquake, but the duration of days was another significant factor. "Awakened sleepers poured into the streets in huddled groups, certain that the day of judgement had come."[23] Jonathan Edwards would soon capitalize on this moment in a series of sermons to exhort the people to turn back to the living God.

Jonathan Edwards, observing through the lens of a preacher or pastor, was able to discern the times and interpret the devastation in physical and in spiritual terms. He was very intentional on not over spiritualizing the moment. Jonathan Edwards consulted sources to explain from a scientific perspective what was going on in the earth to cause such a catastrophic and seismic event. In addition to a natural explanation, Jonathan Edwards inserted God into the situation as well and how the people of New England should respond accordingly. "Edwards explained, God also used earthquakes to warn a covenant people… 'when God gives sinful people warnings of impending judgements, the only way to have them averted is reformation."[24] Reformation is the act of change or improving something that currently is in existence. As a minister of the gospel of Christ, it was his ambition to lead a movement of reformation.

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[22] Hatch and Stout, *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience,* 143.

[23] Hatch and Stout, *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience,* 145.

[24] Hatch and Stout, *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience,* 146.

For Jonathan Edwards to share with the New England community the covenant that God established with the people, for a more complete picture, he also had to present and answer the 'why' question. Why did he and other clergy conclude that the "Great Earthquake" was a consequence of their behavior? "Edwards returned again to the earthquake and rehearsed the corruptions that gave rise to the divine warning."[25] In other words, he had to present his case to persuade a whole community to return to God. Jonathan Edwards had to challenge the people by pointing out the sin within the community.

Jonathan Edwards delivered a sermon where he would outline four major charges against the New England community. It was because of these trespasses that caused the land to become soiled. "In particular Edwards cited an 'abundance of *cheating and injustice'* that had increased since his arrival in Northampton a year earlier. Equally offensive was an increase in *swearing and insensitivity to the great concerns of religion*. This insensitivity was 'especially among the young people' who most needed to consider the state of their souls. Too many of the inhabitants had grown 'secure in riches.'"[26] Swearing, insensitivity, cheating and injustice were all significant enough concerns for Jonathan Edwards to write and preach a sermon designed not to discourage but encourage. He concluded that if New England were experiencing the consequence of sin because of negative behavior, covenantal theology would then conclude that the reverse is just as true. Not only would God provide consequence for sin, but God will also reward and provide blessings for obedience as well. All then would be predicated upon the

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[25] Hatch and Stout, *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience,* 147.

[26] Hatch and Stout, *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience,* 147.

community's response to the catastrophe at hand. Again, the end goal for Jonathan Edwards was conversion and reformation.

Paradigm Shift

The eighteenth century was a pivotal point in early American history. Over the course of one hundred years, an indefinite number of generational and cultural concerns are on the minds of any community. Wars and rumors of war were legitimate concerns that were raised. Religious freedom was beginning to take root on the American soil. The eighteenth century faced many difficulties and victories such as: The Great Awakening, slavery, the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, the Articles of Confederation, and the establishment of the Constitution. There are many more topics that cover the breath of this century; however, chief among these concerns was the issue of slavery. Slavery evolved mightily in America during this period in American history. Continued laws, many first established as early as the sixteenth century, were put in place to better manage the system of enslaving millions of African people.

Slavery in particular took a stronghold in the Southern colonies as the system of enslaving Africans became a major part of labor and economic realities. In fact, what has traditionally been accepted as history, as in the first Africans that were brought to Jamestown in 1619, has been proven inaccurate. A more accurate depiction of history shows that Africans have been enslaved by Europeans as early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. "'There were significant numbers who were brought in as early as 1526,' says Heywood. 'That year, some of these enslaved Africans became part of a

Spanish expedition to establish an outpost in what is now South Carolina. They rebelled, preventing the Spanish from founding the colony.'"[27]

The system of slave trading by the Europeans had begun much earlier. European trade of enslaved Africans began as early as the 1400s. "The first example we have of Africans being taken against their will and put on board European ships would take the story back to 1441," says Guasco, when the Portuguese captured 12 Africans in Cabo Branco—modern-day Mauritania in north Africa—and brought them to Portugal as enslaved peoples."[28] The system of slavery was established as early as the fifteenth century, by the time the eighteenth century comes into being, slavery was a well-established part of European life and had definitely taken root in the Southern colonies, of which, Johnathan Edwards was a part of.

Jonathan Edwards grew up in a communal and familial context where slavery had not only been normalized but had become a status symbol. Jonathan grew up in a patriarchal tradition and nuclear family where each member of the family had strong roles, of which the man, or father, was clearly the head of the household. They system of slavery was a widely accepted practice, and his family of origin, devout Puritans, also considered scripture to be primary in their lives. Since slavery was present in the Bible, the culture in his household and in the community, was not one to abhor the practice. "The enslavement of Africans could take root in seventeenth-century New England not only because even the most pious were not exempt from human cupidity but also because

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[27] Crystal Ponti, "America's History of Slavery Began Long Before Jamestown," History Stories, A and E Television Networks, LLC, August 26, 2019, https://www.history.com/news/american-slavery-before-jamestown-1619.

[28] Ponti, "America's History of Slavery Began Long Before Jamestown," https://www.history.com/news/american-slavery-before-jamestown-1619.

other sorts of enslavements had been common for so long and were taken for granted in scripture."[29]

Jonathan Edwards grew up in a family that owned an African slave. His worldview, in terms of what was acceptable and what was not, was largely viewed through the paradigm of his family of origin. "To help with this work, the Edwardses always had an African Slave. Household slaves were particularly common among New England clergy, both because of a pastor's social status and because the head of the house was not primarily engaged in physical labor."[30] In this brief statement made by Marsden, young Jonathan Edwards is taught valuable lessons about family and faith as it pertains to slavery. Those lessons are that slavery is ok in the context of family and in the context of faith.

Among many clergy at the time, there were a plethora of justifications for men of the cloth to own slaves. One popular justification is as follows: "…he justified slavery as an opportunity for converting Africans to the Gospel."[31] This is what is needed to perpetuate an unjust system, justification. It is inherently inhuman to enslave another human being; however, if one can place a label of injustice upon another human being, treating them accordingly becomes more palatable and acceptable. Jonathan Edwards grew up in a context where he adopted these beliefs and incorporated them within his own life as well.

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[29] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 20.

[30] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 20.

[31] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 20.

Being that this was his context from within his family of origin, it would seem plausible that after Jonathan Edwards left his home and family, he would naturally embark on the journey of incorporating that same practice in his own life. At the young adult age of twenty-eight, Jonathan Edwards purchased another human being to meet his own needs. "Although the records are incomplete, we know that in 1731 Edwards traveled to Newport, Rhode Island, where he purchased a young slave named Venus. By 1736 another African – named Leah – seems to have replaced Venus."[32]

The unfortunate culture of the colonies had become commonplace to own human beings, specifically Africans, and subjugate them for one's own purposes. As a minister of the Gospel, one who is supposed to be "in the world, but not of the world," one is who is supposed to be "above moral reproach," Jonathan Edwards was a reflection of his community as it pertained to this area in his life. It is important to note that Jonathan Edwards was not alone in this practice. "Many elite New Englanders owned African slaves, and Edwards and his close relatives seem usually to have had one or two slaves per household."[33] Jonathan Edwards was a part of this elite, well to do, privilege community and the addition of slaves continued to feed that narrative. "Most British-Americans simply absorbed African slavery into their hierarchical views of society, where it was assumed that the higher orders of society oiled have servants to perform domestic and farm labor."[34]

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[32] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 255.

[33] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 255.

[34] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 256.

What is particularly horrifying about this practice, was that there was a difference in enslaving Africans than "White" indentured servants. White indentured servants were present in the world, and they also were limited in scope as to their freedom. Jonathan Edwards did not own his own kind, if you will. If the principle of obtaining labor in order to perform a particular task was what was needed, then White indentured servants would suffice. This was not his practice. He did not own White indentured servants, but Africans. "The vast differences, of course, were that African slavery was always involuntary and usually perpetual."[35] African slavery was a permanent and indefinite state of being for the African, whereas for the White indentured servant, after a period of time, though treated to some extent as slaves, was but for only a period of time.

There comes a moment within every culture, generation, and within every human being where it must face itself and decide if it will continue with the present logic, a way of thinking or change course. A paradigm is a set of ideas, or a set way of thinking that has been adopted by dominant culture. Within that dominant culture, if you are a part of a free society, one has the power to adopt or reject whatever those ideas are that have been set by dominant culture. Whatever one chooses, there are consequences that are inevitable; however, just because ideas, or norms have been set in place, it does not equate to mandatory acceptance. A paradigm shift; however, is a change in approach, assumptions, and practices. As it pertains to the system of slavery, it was an unfortunate and horrific cultural practice that became normative; however, there were abolitionists during Jonathan Edwards lifespan that offered a challenge to the adopted practices of the institution of slavery.

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[35] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 256.

Jonathan Edwards was placed in a situation where he had to respond publicly to a concern within a church over the system of slavery. This was an opportunity for him to shift his perspective and change the established paradigm. Besides his practice of owning slaves, the controversy of slavery among some, was not something he wrote extensively about. A local pastor, in Northfield, had become the subject of controversy within his congregation owning African slaves. Rev. Doolittle had several concerns waged against him and the subject of slavery was among them. "Some parishioners of the church in Northfield (near Deerfield) had denounced their pastor, Benjamin Doolittle, for owning African slaves."[36] It was in the latter part of 1741 when the members of the congregation took these concerns outside of the church and to the ministerial council. "The controversy over slave owning had come before the Hampshire Association, and Edwards was chosen to draft a response."[37]

In this response to the church and to the minister, when given an opportunity to publicly critique and condemn and unjust moral system, Jonathan Edwards failed to confront the primary issue and defended the plight of the minister instead. Jonathan Edwards disagreed with the intent behind the agitators and made the claim that the real or ultimate concern was not against slavery itself, but to wound their minister which would in fact cause harm to the faith overall, "…only to make disturbances and raise uneasiness among people against their minister to the great wounding of religion."[38] It is important

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[36] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 256.

[37] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 256.

[38] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 256.

to note, in reflection, that it is impossible to bring genuine critique to a system if one believes in, benefits from, and participates in the institution of slavery.

As a minister of the Gospel, Jonathan Edwards failed to see the moral inconsistency of owning slaves and he was not alone with this thinking. He was not interested in changing or challenging the system of slavery. "Edwards and his salve owning colleagues and 'river gods' friends and relatives must have been especially eager in 1741 that the status quo regarding slaveholding not be disturbed."[39] There were arguments to back up his claims, however misguided others may perceive them to be. Scripture references to slavery that were not outright condemned as sinful was chief among them. If perhaps the tables were turned and he had become enslaved, his perspective would be very different and would not need scripture to exert his right to liberty and justice.

His primary argument in favor of the institution was when he said, "using one's 'neighbor's work without wages' was not itself sinful, since the Bible expressly allowed slavery and it would not contradict itself…slavery was not condemned in the New Testament, and there was 'no other sin generally prevalent that is not expressly mentioned and strictly forbidden.'"[40] As a minister of the Gospel, operating under this mentality contributes to the reason why he would not change the paradigm culturally or personally. Jonathan Edwards did not inherently see anything wrong with his position or systemic racism. Jonathan Edwards, despite his contribution to the religious American life, was a racist. Jonathan Edwards believed in the supremacy of the White race and all

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[39] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 257.

[40] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 257.

others in this country were inferior. Due to this mindset, he treated Africans and the indigenous people of the country as such.

As a minister of the Gospel, Jonathan Edwards viewed the system through the lens of Christianity and a fight between good versus evil. "Edwards regarded African and Native American civilization as vastly inferior to Christendom, especially since these heathen people suffered so long under Satan's rule…"[41] It is important to note that even while Jonathan Edwards owned slaves, he was not interested in ending his part in furthering the system and rebutted the congregation for bringing a charge against their minister for owning slaves. He did provide a condemnatory comment surrounding the African slave trade. "At the same time that he defended slavery as not wrong in itself, Edwards made a point of condemning the African slave trade. Do 'other nations have any power or business to disfranchise all the nations of Africa?'"[42]

Jonathan Edwards appears ambivalent at times over the concerns of slavery and reveals, in my eyes, contradictory positions in reference to the equality of the African. In his worldview, polar opposites can exist at the same time. "Edwards explicitly denied that there was any inherent inferiority among different peoples in God's eye."[43] For Edwards, it was possible for the African to be inferior to him in the flesh but seemingly equal to him in the spirit. "We are made of the same human race…Edwards regarded Africans and Indians as spiritual equals."[44] Keeping with this same mentality, as a pastor in his Northampton church, there were several African and Indian persons who were "allowed"

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[41] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 257.

[42] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 257.

[43] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 258.

[44] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 258.

to become members of the congregation. His perspective, in terms of equality with the "lower race" remained strictly in spiritual terms and not reality. He was very careful to keep the lines of demarcation separate. "True to his hierarchical instincts, Edwards pulled back from any politically disruptive implications of this evangelical Christian egalitarianism."[45]

When given the opportunity to make a public statement in response to another congregation over the controversy of slavery, Jonathan Edwards, no different from his colleagues in the ministry and community, failed to effect systemic or paradigmatic change culturally or personally. They believed in, benefited from, and willfully participated in the slave system. Another benefit for continuing the status quo was economics. Free labor, African slavery, was a major economic boost to any community that wholeheartedly embraced its perceived benefits, even if it was at the expense of others. "The whole economy of New England, he implied, depended on products produced by African slavery (a key part in New England's trade was with the slave economies of the Caribbean)."[46]

Another paradigm that was prevalent in Edwards' time and even in the present is the inability or unwillingness to take care of oneself in service to God. Sacrifice of self and family are common themes that are present no matter the discipline. Jonathan Edwards is no different and this aspect of his life should be examined as well. Depression was a strong and ever-present theme throughout his life. Depression is a constant feeling of sadness and an inability at times to carry out day to day activities. Even though it

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[45] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 258.

[46] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 258.

seemed that the world was at his fingertips: an intimate relationship and connection with divinity, beautiful wife and children, respected scholar, minister, and college president, with all that was going in his favor, Jonathan Edwards still suffered from what would now be called a mental illness. In addition to Jonathan Edwards wrestling with depression, he often battled with various kinds of sicknesses. Despite the sicknesses that he had, he continued to press forward and work. "Shortly after Stoddard's death, Edwards's health once again collapsed…After a few weeks back in the pulpit, he was struck down more severely and could not preach for about a month in the early summer."[47]

Jonathan Edwards was pastoring and a community leader in Northampton in the 1730s. Admittedly, Jonathan Edwards had a lot on his plate and while he struggled mentally and physically, he pressed on even to his own detriment. "Likely Edwards was suffering from anxiety and the strain of too much work. He was now responsible for the spiritual and moral oversight of perhaps thirteen hundred people. A congregation of that size, even under the best of circumstances, could be overwhelming for one man."[48] It is important to note that Jonathan Edwards was committed to work; however, it was based out of his intense desire to serve God. His entire life was based on this premise and everything he did came from that place. Jonathan Edwards was totally committed and a driven human being to please God in everything. While this is a good attribute, serving God with all of one's might, it may not serve you well in every facet of life. Every now

[47] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 127.

[48] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 127.

and again, it is important not to overload oneself, pull back from the demands of life and rest.

"As usual, he was working himself too hard. In addition to responsibilities of marriage, becoming a father, assuming the full duties as a pastor, and often preaching three times a week (Sunday morning, Sunday afternoon, and a weekly Thursday lecture), he was also working on a number of ambitious writing projects."[49] There were many projects, professionally and personally, that Jonathan Edwards had going on simultaneously, even while battling sickness. He pressed his way through each and every time while not giving his body and mind adequate time to recuperate. This dynamic was a recurring theme in his life. "In this case he was back at work by the summer, but as late as September 1729 his father reported to Jonathan's sister Anne that her brother was still recovering."[50] Motivated with a sincere passion to serve God, Jonathan Edwards would give God his best by working up to thirteen hours a day. He was a workaholic and sacrificed precious time with family and friends because of his service to God.

Jonathan had a lovely wife and a total of eleven children; however, it was not altogether possible to devote his time in service to God and be the kind of father and husband that was required at the same time. To take on household responsibilities would serve as a distraction and this was not an option, he was willing to consider. As a result of facing these two very much needed realities, he turned over much of the responsibilities to his wife. These responsibilities manifested itself in small ways. Something as simple as taking time to spend with one's family over dinner, at times, he chose another path. "I

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[49] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 127.

[50] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 128.

judge that it is best, when I am in a good frame for divine contemplation, or engaged in reading the Scriptures, or any study in divine subjects, that ordinarily, I will not be interrupted by going to dinner, but will forego my dinner, rather than be broke off."[51]

As a husband, he was distracted by work. As a father, he was distracted by work. His devotion to the Lord caused him to make family sacrifices, which inevitably left his wife and children to fend for themselves. "In order to work every possible minute, it was essential that he not be unduly distracted. He turned over the management of the house and oversight of the husbandry to Sarah, who must have been working at least as many hours per day as Jonathan."[52] Although his health was shaky at various points in his life, Jonathan Edwards did try to exercise outside and engage in weather appropriate physical activity, when possible. Physical activity benefited his health; however, even in exercise, Jonathan Edwards turned this into a spiritual enterprise. "His walks were in part for contemplation, prayer, and spiritual communion, but so that not time would be wasted, he also carried with him pen and ink to write down his thoughts along the way."[53]

Towards the end of his life, Jonathan Edwards was presented with the opportunity to become the President of Princeton College, formerly the College of New Jersey. Although this was a tremendous opportunity to serve in an academic climate, Jonathan Edwards was very hesitant to accepting this newfound position. Aaron Burr, then President of Princeton College, had recently passed away and immediately afterwards, the college began their search for a new college president. The college reached out to

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[51] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 135.

[52] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 135.

[53] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 135-136.

Jonathan Edwards, and he provided two reasons why he must decline. “The first was the matter of his physical health. He described his ‘peculiar unhappy’ constitution in a way that suggests chronic poor digestion resulting in low spirits, ‘childish weakness and contemptibleness of speech, presence, demeanor; with a disagreeable dullness and stiffness, much unfitting me for conversation, but more especially for the government of a college.”[54] In other words, Jonathan Edwards was not in good health or well enough to become the president of a college and give it its due diligence. The second reason was because of his life’s work to complete several collections of notebooks.

To be faithful to the process, Jonathan Edwards turned over the power of the decision to a local ministerial council. They concluded that he should accept the position of president, and soon afterwards, he was on his way to Princeton, New Jersey with his wife and children soon to follow. While he left his wife and some of his children behind, a couple of his older daughters were already living in New Jersey, and they were able to connect. Not being in good health, various illnesses were present, and smallpox had a strong presence in the area. Jonathan Edwards, under the care of a qualified physician, advocated for and was a participant in an inoculation procedure. In the beginning, everything fared well but then he made a turn for the worse.

“Edwards contracted smallpox on the roof of his mouth and throat. It soon became impossible for him to swallow the liquids that were considered necessary to prevent a secondary fever. After weeks of fever and starvation ravishing his ‘feeble frame’ he died peacefully on the afternoon of March 22.”[55] It is plausible to conclude that

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[54] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 430.

[55] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 493-494.

the reason Jonathan Edward's body was unable to fight off the smallpox virus was because his system was compromised prior to him accepting the position of president.

Conclusion

What is the conclusion of the whole matter? Although Jonathan Edwards was a great man and was a towering figure in the early eighteenth century, he was also a human being with faults and failures. As we discussed, the historical foundation chapter focused on three categories: personal, professional, and paradigm. Jonathan Edwards' life can be and should be brought into contemporary times because it is necessary for all of us to examine our own families of origin. Once we can examine where we come from and why we are the way that we are, then we can make a solid choice in examining our values are and make choices that are consistent with those values.

Each and every one of us has an opportunity to discuss and dissect what our life's work will be and what it will look like in our context of history. What kind of impact do we want to make in the world? Whether that is within the family or the community? As we press pause and take an intentional introspective look at our lives, what paradigms need to be shifted, reexamined, or reevaluated? For Jonathan Edwards, he learned the value of having a strong work ethic, but at what cost? He sacrificed a lot when it came to family and his own personal health.

This is relevant in 2020, especially among clergy, because many clergy persons have a deep desire and commitment to serve God and devote their lives towards this ideal. Building ministries in every facet of life is important and noteworthy. Serving people and improving their quality of life is important and worthy of praise and

affirmation; however, too long have clergy persons sacrificed their families and physical or mental health in the name of service to God. Does God really require one to sacrifice those things all to serve? Is this what God desires, or is this an interpretation of what God desires for us and possibly, have we missed the mark?

There are many kids whose parents were and are clergy who do not want to have anything to do with the church because they felt as if the church was more important. Is this what God wants? A well-known pastor informed me, “The wife never wants to admit that the church is the other woman.” This was expressed in the context of why pastors need to spend so much time building the ministry of God at the church. He himself was divorced, because of the ministry, and “married to the church.” Is this what God desires? The life lessons gleaned are that it is time for a paradigm shift within this generation. We do not have to sacrifice family or our personal health to serve God.

In keeping with that same perspective, in pushing for health and wellness, the biblical text is a foundation to stand upon. The church can and should also look to history to incorporate and add to that foundation. Another part discipline to include into standing on a firm foundation is that of theology. What or how can the discipline of theology help our mentality on living a healthier lifestyle? There are theological principles that can lead us to embodying a genuine spirit of health and wellness.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Theology and biblical study share a very close theme. Theology is more accessible because the Bible points out theological themes for healthy debate. The ability to think critically and use our minds to discuss difficult subject is a part of how we love God. Thinking critically about theological matters is also important because it has the potential to ground a person's belief when life presents difficult scenarios to overcome. The purpose for this chapter is to support the theme of this doctoral project, which is a "Paradigm Shift: A Model for Clergy and Congregations to Partner and Adopt Holistic Approaches to Health and Wellness." The purpose for this chapter is also to support the research project that was implemented at Advent United Church of Christ in Columbus, Ohio. The research program was called the "Inside Out Health Initiative." This chapter looks at the theology of sabbath and while instituted thousands of years ago, does the principle of sabbath hold relevance in the twenty-first century? An exploration of sabbath will be examined, its original purpose, and how it has evolved over time will be sought out in this chapter.

The creation narrative is the foundation upon which the Genesis account is established. In chapters one and two, the primary author of Genesis—Moses—attempts to answer the question: from where did humanity, animals, and the rest of creation come?

Countless people raised this general question, and one working conclusion, from the Jewish perspective, is that Elohim created both the universe and the world. There are many names for God, and Elohim is the name that this theological foundation uses to refrain from referring to God as male or female. The name for God, as the Hebrew scriptures express is Elohim—the God of Israel in the Old Testament.

The Genesis account records these words in Genesis the first chapter and the first verse: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth" (Gn. 1:1). Here Elohim demonstrates Elohim's creative power and throughout the chapter the reader is privy to Elohim creating the world, the universe, and every living creature over a period of six days. At the conclusion of the sixth day and at the beginning of the seventh day, the text records that Elohim ceased all work and displayed behavior that differed from Elohim's previous creative acts—Elohim rested.

Elohim ceased from all work, rested, and separated the seventh day from all other days, making it holy. Genesis reads, "Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So, God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation" (Gn. 2:1-3). In the third verse Elohim clearly distinguishes the seventh day by expressing two words, thereby giving it distinction: bless and hallow. Elohim hallows this day and marks it as a day of blessing. To hallow something is to make it holy, sacred, or to consecrate. It carries an understanding of setting something a part for a specific purpose. Furthermore, to bless in this context carries a meaning of praise, adoration, and

to kneel. Elohim separates the seventh day from the other six, and Elohim designs it to be a holy and sacred day that is filled with praise.

Elohim expresses intent that on this day, after a significant period of consistent work and emptying oneself out, resting one's body is paramount. One could then conclude that rest is holy and blessed. This chapter, in a systematic theological way, provides a sound theological perspective on the idea of Sabbath. Larry Hart defines the concept by writing that "Systematic theology takes what the bible teaches and relates it to contemporary questions and knowledge."[1] The concept of Sabbath is a foundational biblical principle; however, it can be challenging to incorporate consistent moments or periods of rest into one's lifestyle. The intent is to explore and present a fuller understanding of what Sabbath means and how its relevance for both clergy and congregations would benefit its adherents. This chapter explores the degree to which Sabbath can contribute to one's overall health, albeit physical, mental, and spiritual. In the twenty-first century, the culture of American life can be very hectic, where the need to work and a desire to parse out time for family, friends, and the pursuit of happiness oftentimes conflict. What does it look like for a bi-vocational clergy person, for example, to adequately and appropriately incorporate Sabbath into his or her life while struggling to juggle multiple real-life situations simultaneously?

The intent of this research is to explore the degree to which Sabbath, or rest, contribute to a person's overall quality of life. This research explores the origins of Sabbath, details its cultural context, and expresses how Sabbath translates into a twenty-first century context. This chapter explores a theology of Sabbath primarily through the

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[1] Larry D. Hart, *Truth Aflame: Theology for the Church in Renewal*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2005), 2.

lens of noted biblical scholar and theologian Walter Brueggemann. As such, this chapter explores and lists practical ways that Sabbath can contribute to one's overall health, albeit physical, mental, and spiritual. In the twenty-first century, American life consists of production and consumerism, while persons significantly neglect spending intentional time dedicated to family, friends, and the pursuit of personal fulfillment. The pages that follow seeks to explore the possibility of clergy and congregations taking intentional time to rest their bodies and enjoy life. This foundation aims to conclude that clergy and congregations should partner together and model responsible healthy behavior in front of others. Congregations typically follow the example of their clergyperson and if clergy push the spiritual practice of Sabbath, the culture of the entire congregation has the potential to change, and this will affect generations to come.

Main Body

If one pays specific attention to the context of the Genesis narrative, Sabbath is at the conclusion of the creation process. Elohim specifically marks this day as a day of rest. The idea of Sabbath evolved in the Hebrew Scriptures from a day of rest into a day of worship. Walter Brueggemann highlights what the day is supposed to represent. He writes that "The original sabbath in Israel was not a day of worship but a day of rest."[2] This is important because the original design of the sabbath was to cease from all work and rest one's body, mind, and spirit. Life differs greatly from biblical times; however, the principle remains true. Rest is a principle that God sanctioned for humanity.

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[2] Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 35.

Why would Elohim insert and instruct humanity to rest and cease from all forms of labor? According to Brueggemann, Elohim not only enacted a practice of Sabbath or rest as an affirmation of faith and resistance, but as a significant challenge for humanity due to its fundamental lack of trust in Elohim to provide; thus, humanity works itself in unhealthy ways all to secure as much as possible. Brueggemann adds that "It was then and is now an assertion that life does not depend upon our feverish activity of self-securing, but that there can be a pause in which life is given to us simply as a gift."[3]

Elohim's goal for sabbath was to instruct humanity to cease from all forms of work, and to consistently insert Sabbath into one's life. Not only was Sabbath an instruction to cease from all work and to simply rest, but Sabbath in its original context failed to relate to or connect with worship. When looking at Sabbath as a cessation from work and to intentionally rest, it behooves humankind to remember that Elohim is the one who will provide for all humankind's needs. To embody the belief that humankind has the ultimate power to meet its own needs, and that failing to take advantage of every "single opportunity" result in its needs not being met, is a fallacy that one could interpret as idolatry. This fallacy is the belief that "I, and I alone, can meet my need."

By Elohim introducing the concept of Sabbath into the equation, there is a dynamic of trust from humanity's perspective, that the creator of all things will continue to be faithful and provide. Not only is trust essential that Elohim will provide, but also that Elohim sees the larger picture and understands that Elohim has humanity's best interests in mind. Humanity needs to trust and believe that a cessation of work for a short season fails to result in the world coming to an end. Brueggemann writes that:

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[3] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 35.

> The sabbath is a kerygmatic statement about the world. It announces that the world is safely in God's hands. The world will not disintegrate if we stop our efforts. The world relies on God's promises and not on our efforts. The observance of sabbath rest is a break with every effort to achieve, to secure ourselves, and to make the world into our image according to our purposes.[4]

In other words, by using the term kerygmatic Brueggemann essentially argues that Elohim cries out or making a proclamation to humanity. In other words, Elohim makes a statement that humanity not only needs to hear but implement for the benefit of humankind. In the New Testament, Jesus—the Lord of the sabbath—also references the sabbath as a benefit. The gospel of Mark states that "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so, the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath" (Mk. 2:27-28).

Continuing to push the narrative and to think theologically about the meaning of Sabbath and how persons should implement it in everyday life is important. Sabbath is cessation from all forms of work that results in rest and is a practice that Elohim implemented as an example for humanity to follow. Resting benefitted Elohim, and it also benefits humankind. Brueggemann continues by writing that "The sabbath of Gen. 2:1-a is about the rest of God. But because humankind is in the image of God, the rest of God is a promised rest for humankind."[5] Understanding its original context results in an appreciation for Elohim's intention. In fact, "As it is kept by the faithful week by week, sabbath is a disciplined reminder of how creation is intended."[6] If humanity desires to

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[4] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 35.

[5] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 36.

[6] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 36.

develop a relationship with Elohim, understanding original intention would provide deeper insight into Elohim's way of thinking.

Developing a relationship or connection with divinity is the desire for many who are believers in God and understanding the sabbath is a way to get to *know* Elohim. To this point Brueggemann adds that, "In a second priestly statement about sabbath (Exod. 31: 12-17), it is affirmed that keeping sabbath, that is, breaking with the world of frantic self-securing, is a way to know God and his commitment to his world."[7] Getting to know Elohim and understanding Elohim's mentality, might lead one to ask the following question about positioning: why not work, rest, and continue to work? In the second chapter of Genesis, work was pushed and placed at the end. Elohim could have rested at the conclusion of each of day and sanctioned it accordingly, but not so. Elohim rested, ceased from work, and sanctioned the seventh day.

Upon further examination of the text, Elohim concludes each day by acknowledging and affirming the work that took place. Affirmation in this context takes on a different form. Brueggemann notes that,

> The "good" used here does not refer primarily to a moral quality, but to an aesthetic quality. It might better be translated "lovely, pleasing, beautiful" (Eccles. 3:11). The shift from the sixth day to the seventh is perhaps, then, not just that time has run its course, but that God knows satisfaction and delight in what he has wrought. He rests not because the week ends, but because there is a satisfying, finished quality in his creation.[8]

Thinking theologically, what is Elohim after? The reason Elohim failed to insert sabbath at the conclusion of each day, while work or creation took place each day, is that the entire project of creation was not complete until the sixth day. Elohim affirms the work of

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[7] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 36.

[8] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 37.

creation as good or pleasing and then Elohim institutes Sabbath as a practice. When Elohim experiences the benefits of Sabbath, Elohim then instructs humankind to follow suit and benefit from it as well. Elohim gives humankind six days to work on whatever humankind deems fit, and after six days humankind must implement Sabbath and rest body, mind, and spirit.

The concept of Sabbath is one of evolution throughout the Old Testament and noted biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann not only contributed to the conversation by way of commentary, but the late biblical scholar and theologian Patrick Miller also added a significant voice. In addition to the book of Genesis, the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy expand the teachings of Sabbath. Patrick Miller, a noted scholar of the book of Deuteronomy, points out the smallest details and differences of the sabbath between Exodus and Deuteronomy. Both expressions and interpretations of sabbath are significant and adds to one's understanding of Elohim's intentions regarding humanity. For example, in the book of Deuteronomy, Miller points to the positioning of sabbath in the Ten Commandments or the Decalogue. Miller writes, "The sabbath commandment in the Deuteronomic formulation is both the bridge from God to neighbor, in that it deals in some sense with relations to God and responsibilities in the human sphere, and the center of the Decalogue."[9] Miller argues how taking a sabbaths rest will inevitably contribute to an individual's connectivity to divinity, as well as benefit that same person or community as well.

In a twenty-first century western context, Sabbath oftentimes can be relegated to and placed on an individual; however, in its original context and mindset, Sabbath had

[9] Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2012), 72.

more to do with the entire community, rather than a sole individual's cessation from work. Miller points out that while the community ceases from all work on a consistent basis, it is not a time, however, devoid of any activity. While work takes place for six days during the week and on the seventh day there is mandated rest, activity take place and devotion to Elohim replaces work. According to the text in Deuteronomy, Miller highlights three factors to take into consideration as one ponders devotion to God while resting from work. He writes, "On a regular basis, members of the community are to set aside their normal routines and work activities to gain rest and refreshment; further, they are to see that such rest is available to all, including those who might not normally have the freedom to relax from work…"[10] In his first pivotal point, Miller identifies two groups of people that should directly benefit from and have free access to Sabbath: "members of the community," and "availability to all."

Although Miller identifies these two groups of people, the "all" in the group is most important. "All" refers to the slave and how the slave or servant should have free access to a consistent sabbath rest. In addition to the slave, all foreigners who reside in the towns should have equal and free access to a consistent sabbath rest. Finally, in addition to slaves and foreigners, animals are to be extended a consistent sabbath rest. This is important to highlight on a theological basis because it speaks to the equity of Elohim. The Decalogue demonstrates equity because it fails to limit Sabbath to Elohim's "chosen people." The Decalogue fails to limit sabbath to a select few, but rather Sabbath benefits all people regardless of status or the lack thereof.

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[10] Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 80.

Regarding activity in which one should actively engage, Miller writes that "in some manner the day should be set aside to God: that is, worship and divine service are aspects of the day of rest…"[11] Miller points out the necessity of specifically focusing on the day of sabbath as a day of devotion unto Elohim. One should center one's thoughts, actions, praise, and adoration on Elohim. Elohim is the one responsible for creating an opportunity for rest and made the declaration that all should observe the sabbath. From this type of teaching, worship emerged within the Jewish tradition on the sabbath day, which is Saturday. For Judeo-Christians, the day of worship or sabbath was moved from Saturday to Sunday because of the resurrection of Jesus.

The final factor to take into consideration as one ponders devotion to God, according to Miller, is "on the day of rest the community is to recall the redeeming work of God."[12] In other words, in addition to offering worship and praise unto Elohim for who Elohim is, sabbath participants ought to worship and praise Elohim for what Elohim did. Keeping in mind that thinking theologically is the art of adapting biblical teachings and applying them to a particular context. For the Israelite community, they were given charge to not only reflect upon the redemptive works of Elohim in relation to their personal lives, but also as a community. Communally speaking, Elohim delivered them from slavery and into a land of freedom and opportunity. As the community celebrates Sabbath, the whole community is charged to rest, worship, and reflect.

The larger overarching question that this chapter attempts to answer is, what does Sabbath really mean theologically and how is the concept of Sabbath lived out in the

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[11] Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 80.

[12] Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 80.

twenty-first century context? While implementing Sabbath into practice might be challenging, Elohim's intent was for persons never to view it as a curse or burden. Instead, Patrick Miller argues that one should view and embrace Sabbath as a gift from Elohim. As the community warms up to the idea and embraces the concept of Sabbath as a gift, the hope is that persons would more readily observe the sabbath with joy instead of inconvenience. Miller is correct when he writes, "The Lord's blessing of the sabbath is the provision of the sabbath as a gift for human existence. The sabbath belongs to the providential work of God in providing for the continuity of life. It is given to bless human existence."[13] To reiterate, Jesus of Nazareth reemphasizes Sabbath as gift when he expresses how God made the sabbath for humankind and not the other way around. When Elohim originally instituted Sabbath in Genesis and in Deuteronomy, both books express how Elohim intended the sabbath as a gift to humanity. In *Deuteronomy*, Patrick Miller writes that "While it is something to be done by us for our good and thus comes to us as command, it is also something to be received for our enjoyment and benefit and thus comes to us as gift."[14]

Continuing with the thought of Sabbath as gift, not only should one view Sabbath through the lens of benevolence to humanity, but in a society driven by economic prosperity and survival of the fittest, one should view Sabbath as a welcome suspension and interlude from the rigorous expectations that come along with work. For the Israelite community to survive and thrive, persons must take advantage of opportunities at every point. Inevitably, as one seeks to provide for one's family, spending more and more time

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[13] Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 81.

[14] Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 81.

working to obtain income can become more challenging. Elohim, being aware of this stressful way of living, freely instituted Sabbath for persons to rest and still the body to counter this kind of lifestyle. In this context, one should view Sabbath even more as a welcome partner. Miller writes,

> As a gift, the primary character of the sabbath is rest. It places in the cycle of life a provision for freedom from the tyranny and oppression of unrelenting human labors, drivenness, and the increasing pressure of unceasing work. The sabbath commandment does not command work for six days; it assumes that human existence requires this hard labor. In the Old Testament, hard toil is a necessary evil that participates in and grows out of the sinful propensities of humankind (Gen. 3). Work has its reward, but only under the shadow and protection of the sabbath.[15]

Sabbath as a break away from the rigors of work is a benefit; however, Sabbath, as instituted by Elohim, is also a reminder that humankind cannot solely meet its own needs. Without the foundation of Elohim as the supreme source, humankind would fail at providing for itself. Sabbath then becomes a reminder that Elohim is the one who makes ultimate provision. Elohim's commandment also serves to keep humanity away from the idolization of work to become successful. In no way, shape, or form does Elohim discourage work; however, the implementation of consistent weekly sabbath will continue to remind humankind that Elohim is the source for all health, life, and strength. Miller notes that:

> It helps protect against the idolizing of work by setting it as the center of value and meaning. The sabbath as a rest that is open to God relativizes human work and pulls people away from their own goals and energies and endeavors, so they remember the larger work of God. It reminds the believing community that human plans and labors, intelligence and strength, gifts and accomplishments are not the heal all and end-all of human existence.[16]

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[15] Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 81.

[16] Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 82.

Miller further adds,

> The holy day does not invalidate human work, but it limits and relativizes it. It does not forbid work, but it forbids ultimate trust in our own work. Setting apart one day regularly to the Lord inhibits the human inclination to justify oneself by job or work. The sabbath is a concrete symbol that God's saving grace is what redeems human life rather than any or all work.[17]

In continuing to explore the meaning behind Sabbath and its original intent, Patrick Miller draws a distinction between Sabbath and a person taking a regular day off from work. He points out that it was the sabbath itself that distinguished the Israelite community from other communities both near and far. The Israelite spiritual community was supposed to be wholly different from the rest of society and to model life as they devote themselves unto Elohim. According to Miller, "The Sabbath is one of the marks of the people of God. More than anything except the first and second commandments, the sabbath was the reality that identified and distinguished Israel. A regular time of rest is not in itself a sign of the people of God, a mark of the congregation. Sabbath is the sign that includes the rest at its center."[18] Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, Elohim desired a sharp distinction between the people who belonged to Elohim and the rest of society. The Israelites believed they were Elohim's chosen people. By placing Sabbath as the center of their lives, this would in effect be a mark of distinction for the Israelite community.

Miller continues to express that as one partakes in the sabbath, there is a difference between taking a day off from work and devoting that same day unto Elohim. So pertinent is the sabbath in the community and as an individual, Miller claims that

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[17] Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 82.

[18] Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 83.

one's very identity is wrapped up in the consistent practice of sabbath. Identity is crucial. Miller continues by noting that,

> There really is a difference between experiencing a day off and experiencing a day off sanctified to the Lord. Neither Jewish nor Christian existence can be maintained as a vital reality without sabbath sanctification. Nor does one receive the visible mark or share the identity of those whose God is the Lord without participation in the sabbath rest and the Sunday celebration.[19]

Elohim created the sabbath and Elohim placed no limits upon who is eligible to receive rest. Elohim makes it clear that all should receive and enjoy the sabbath, regardless of societal status. Elohim intentionally inserted this benefit in the Decalogue to thwart corrupt individuals or abusive societal structures. Elohim commands everyone to have equal access to a sabbaths rest on a consistent basis. The sabbath has a foundational principle of love and how persons engage or treat one another, in addition to themselves. In fact, "The gifts of the sabbath are for all. The sabbath is set to provide the reality of freedom, celebration, and rest for everyone, especially for those who might not easily find it. Therefore, Deuteronomy especially focuses the purpose of the sabbath on the provision of rest for the manservant and maidservant (vv. 14b-15c)."[20] On the same page, Miller notes that, "Love of neighbor is exemplified in providing sabbath rest for all members of the community."[21] In other words, Elohim's concern knows no limits, or bounds. Elohim is concerned about all of Elohim's creation.

Up to this point, this chapter explored the meaning of Sabbath in its original context and examined the sabbath in both biblical accounts of Genesis and Deuteronomy.

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[19] Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 83.

[20] Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 83.

[21] Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 83.

This chapter also examined the theological perspectives of Walter Brueggemann and Patrick Miller. The pages above established that the sabbath is full of meaning and is a benefit to humanity and is a gift that should be extended towards everyone. However, what does Sabbath look like in a twenty-first century context? In today's American society, though very much present in other societies and cultures, there is very little time for rest and relaxation. There is very little time to develop and cultivate meaningful relationships with others because of the demands of professional and personal responsibilities. In his article, Mark Slouka writes that, "The business of business is everywhere and inescapable; the song of the buyers and the sellers never stops; the term 'workaholic' has been folded up and put away. We have no time for our friends or our families, no time to think or to make a meal. We're moving product, while the soul drowns like a cat in a well."[22]

Slouka looks at Henry David Thoreau, a nineteenth century naturalist, essayist, poet, and philosopher, as he takes a shot at the culture of work in American society. He writes, "I am awake almost every night by the panting of the locomotive. It interrupts my dreams. There is no Sabbath. It would be glorious to see mankind at leisure for once. It is nothing but work, work, work."[23] Slouka echoes Thoreau's sentiments as he affirms his statements as more than accurate by comparing how persons lived in the nineteenth century to the twenty first century. He further expounds on the notion of work and how in today's context and culture, work eased its way into every area of life and there is no

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[22] Mark Slouka, "Quitting the Paint Factory: On the Virtues of Idleness," *Harper's Magazine*, November 2004, 57, *Gale Academic OneFile*, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A126194931/AONE?u=upl1179&sid=AONE&xid=ca47f10b.

[23] Slouka, "Quitting the Paint Factory," 57.

escape. Slouka observes that "Little did he know. Today the roads of commerce, paved and smoothed, reach into every nook and cranny of the republic; there is no place apart, no place where we would be shut of the drone of that damnable traffic. Today we, quite literally, live to work. And it hardly matters what kind of work we do; the process justifies the ends."[24]

Amid all the busyness of professional and personal life, if one is not careful, one will never include taking a break or rest in one's schedule. With the mentality of working to live, maintaining a household, being a caregiver for aging parents, and a host of other things, one could view parsing out time for self-care as unrealistic or unachievable. Clergy, for example, are oftentimes guilty of a not implementing quality self-care procedures and principles in their lives. Bi-vocational pastors have an added burden of working a full-time job, maintaining a household—whether married or single—and providing service to the church and its members. Clergy continue to burn out, and when clergy fail to intentionally insert Sabbath into common practice, clergy can potentially lose their desire and effectiveness. Roy Oswald writes that "The tragedy is that our best clergy-the hard-working, dedicated folk who have given too much of themselves for too long without replenishing the cup-are burning out. These burned-out clergy usually become dull, hollow, and uninteresting."[25]

One could ask of communities and individuals alike this question: how do individuals, congregations, and clergy make the shift from living a hectic lifestyle to incorporating and infusing moments of rest into their lives? How does one theologically

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[24] Slouka, "Quitting the Paint Factory," 57.

[25] Roy M. Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1991), 4.

apply and implement a mental and physical move towards incorporating consistent Sabbath into normal life? One thing that persons must do is view Sabbath as a value or a nonnegotiable. Walter Brueggemann acknowledged the difficulty of such a monumental task but mentions that life necessitates incorporating Sabbath into each person's life. Brueggemann views the sabbath as one of his spiritual disciplines and this discipline he holds with significant value, writing "I have come to the conclusion that the Sabbath is the most important of the commandments for us and the most difficult, and the reason it's so difficult is that we are caught in the totalism, and in the totalism there is no Sabbath. You have to be producing and consuming."[26]

A better understanding of totalism "is a constructed world that is totalitarian, that is, it claims to totally comprehend and control everything and everyone within it, to be the only possible world, to be reality itself."[27] Brueggemann argues that the current world system is that of production and consumption. Since this is how the world is set up, taking an intentional pause or break out of the system would in and of itself be a revolutionary act. Being caught in a totalistic or totalitarian society is a vicious cycle. There is no unintentional way of escape, and without critical thinking and strategic implementation communities are swept up into the vortex without question. Individuals, communities, and societies feel and experience the devastating consequences of such a perilous lifestyle. People have limited time for family and personal liberties because of

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[26] Walter Brueggemann and Clover Reuter Beal, *An On-Going Imagination: A Conversation about Scripture, Faith, and the Thickness of Relationship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), 79.

[27] Brueggemann and Beal, *An On-Going Imagination*, 69.

work. The quality of life sharply and drastically decreases because there is no cessation of work.

Brueggemann speaks of the current system of production and consumption as a 'rat race.' A rat race is an ever-continuing consuming pursuit that has no point or end. In addition to balancing professional work, personal responsibilities with family, aging parents, and maintaining personal health, just to name a few, can become overwhelming. Taking oneself out of the rat race of life is not only an action that will benefit the individual, but it would be a model to pass down to future generations. Brueggemann and Beal add the following: "I think that practicing Sabbath is a public, visible decision that my life is not defined by the rat race of production and consumption. And I think that our children and our grandchildren need to see us engaging in that act of resistance because we are a different kind of people."[28]

Consider bi-vocational clergy persons as an example. What does Sabbath look like in a twenty-first century context for clergypersons who supports themselves with full time employment in addition to pastoring a local congregation? As a clergyperson who is married with three children. Each of the three children are involved in extra-curricular activities—sometimes simultaneously. The clergyperson oftentimes is torn between the demands of employment and balancing the reality of family. Brueggemann relates the demands of today's contextual reality with that of the Israelites and the demands placed upon them. Brueggemann and Beal write that "The totalism of market ideology wants always to crowd in on Sabbath and make us consumers and producers. The astonishing affirmation of Sabbath is that the reason they left Egypt is that they didn't want their life

[28] Brueggemann and Beal, *An On-Going Imagination*, 80.

to be defined by meeting brick quotas."[29] This perspective is representative of not just the Israelite people, but wisdom literature within the Hebrew scriptures also express this theme. Proverbs reminds readers that "The good leave an inheritance to their children's children…" (Prv. 13:22). Brueggemann and Beal align Sabbath with leaving an inheritance in that Sabbath is a gift from Elohim to leave to future generations. They note, "I think that practicing Sabbath is a public, visible decision that my life is not defined by the rat race of production and consumption. And I think that our children and our grandchildren need to see us engaging in that act of resistance because we are a different kind of people."[30]

Amid all the responsibilities, whether of clergypersons or any other profession, if one is going to insert Sabbath or rest into one's lifestyle on a consistent basis, Brueggemann suggests that one must do so through a revolutionary act of intentionality. One must purposely place Sabbath on the mental calendar or else each day will come and go with what Brueggemann refers to as production and consumption ultimately consuming each day. No one escapes the rat race lifestyle on a whim or wish; it must be an intentional act and one that requires discipline. Brueggemann and Beal to this point write that, "We now live in a culture in which maintaining a serious Christian identity requires huge intentionality as well. That wasn't true when I was growing up; everybody was more or less on board. But it is true now. Sabbath is one of those acts of intentionality whereby we remind ourselves of who we really are."[31]

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[29] Brueggemann and Beal, *An On-Going Imagination*, 80.

[30] Brueggemann and Beal, *An On-Going Imagination*, 80.

[31] Brueggemann and Beal, *An On-Going Imagination*, 80.

As one continues to implement healthy practices of rest through intentional efforts, the hope and prayer is that of enlightenment and a renewed mind. The hope, Brueggemann offers, is for humanity to see itself as more than just a producer and a consumer. This can only occur if an act of resistance to the status quo commenced and only after pulling out of the rat race on a consistent basis can one see more clearly. Brueggemann writes that "The Sabbath rest of God is the acknowledgment that God and God's people in the world are not commodities to be dispatched for endless production and so dispatched, as we used to say, as "hands" in the service of a command economy."[32]

Recognizing both professionally and personally that individuals belong to Elohim and Elohim belongs to them is important. Those in relationship with Elohim should follow the example Elohim laid out for humanity. As it pertains to work, there are some that are so devoted to work and the results, they could be classified as workaholics. A workaholic is someone who has an improper relationship with and unbalanced devotion of time towards work. This unbalanced devotion to work causes tension with familial relationships. For example, there are some clergy who are guilty of being classified as workaholics. It is not that their intention is bad; however, in their efforts and desires to serve Elohim and the church, an exorbitant amount of time during each week is given and little to no attention nor devotion is given to family or to themselves. However noble, this is not the intention nor model that Elohim left for humanity to follow. Brueggemann writes "That divine rest on the seventh day of creation has made clear (a) that YHWH is

[32] Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 6.

not a workaholic, (b) that YHWH is not anxious about the full functioning of creation, and (c) that the well-being of creation does not depend on endless work."[33]

The last phrase is noteworthy — "The well-being of creation does not depend on endless work." Endless work will not produce the ultimate results that one seeks. One reason is because there is no bottom, or no end. The work of ministry is bottomless. Serving the needs of people in the community is an ongoing process and will never cease. In Matthew, Jesus says, "For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me" (Mt. 26:11). If there is no end to work, if there will always be a need to help others, if maintaining a family is a value, then the logical conclusion is that one should be very attentive to consistently incorporating a day or moments of pause to rest, reflect, and recuperate. This statement also speaks to trust or the lack thereof. Elohim is the one who brings forth ultimate fruit from humankind's labor and not themselves. Failing to take care of themselves and implement Sabbath may limit their potentials for growth and fruitfulness in the future.

Elohim knew what would be best for humanity. As Elohim established with all creation—not just humanity—Elohim intended no part of creation to produce endlessly. All aspects of creation have built in their DNA the need for rest. Elohim, knowing humanity's state of being and its limitations, provided this commandment, once again, for the benefit of all. In *Tenacious Solidarity*, Brueggemann writes, "It is rather an acknowledgment of the human condition and of God's pro-vision for human frailty and fragility, made clear in the affirmation that even God's own life or self can be depleted

[33] Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*, 6.

and diminished. Thus, Sabbath is a mighty antidote to an economy of depletion and diminishment."[34]

When persons take it upon themselves to yield endlessly to work and make no consistent time for Sabbath, they lose sight of the belief that Elohim is the one who is in control of all things and not them. Everything in this world belongs to Elohim and Sabbath teaches persons from a holistic perspective that they are more than our work. Brueggemann notes that:

> Sabbath is an insistence on rest for even the most vulnerable among us. Theologically, it is an insistence that the world does not belong to the predators. It belongs to the creator of heaven and earth, who intends that those in God's image cannot be reduced to commodity...This God has never intended that the earth should be plundered for the sake of limitless wealth.[35]

The space above mentions that Sabbath is a benefit to humanity, and all should enjoy sabbath on a consistent or weekly basis. Patrick Miller argues that Sabbath is a gift from Elohim, but what are some of those benefits that Sabbath can offer to individuals and communities? Can Sabbath contribute to an individual's overall person and the quality of an individual's life? Besides adhering to a commandment spoken thousands of years ago, can Sabbath be fruitful on a practical level within the twenty-first century? Barbara Speedling speaks of Sabbath from a holistic perspective in which she studies ten women between the ages of twenty and sixty-three years of age who were not a part of communities where persons widely practiced or encouraged Sabbath. She deduced from a diverse group of women several practical benefits to keeping Sabbath in their lives. She feels that not taking a sabbath is a potential detriment to our persons' lives. Speedling

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[34] Walter Brueggemann, *Tenacious Solidarity: Biblical Provocations on Race, Religion, Climate, and the Economy* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2018), 226.

[35] Brueggemann, *Tenacious Solidarity*, 233.

opines the following: "I believe most of us have abandoned the ancient tradition of Sabbath-keeping to our detriment and that of the broader world. As Ringwald declares, 'The Sabbath remains the dessert most people leave on the table.'"[36] If persons abandoned keeping the sabbath or never received teaching on the value of keeping such a tradition, how can persons return or learn to value such a gift and what it offers? If one packaged Sabbath and sells it to individuals and communities, one would have to highlight the benefits of incorporating such practice into one's life. This would require taking an ancient principle and making it palatable in the twenty-first century context.

Barbara Speedling shares her personable experiences and benefits from incorporating Sabbath in her own life. She states that, "I contend reviving the best parts of Sabbath-keeping can help us flourish individually and collectively. Sabbath-keeping, however, is not just a spiritual practice; it is also an effective, accessible, holistic health practice that can contribute to the well-being of individuals, communities, and the earth."[37] For those that participated in the study over the course of six months, six themes emerged out of the group that were direct benefits to each person. Speedling records that "Sabbath-keeping enhanced self-awareness, improved self-care, enriched relationships, developed spirituality, positively affected the rest of a Sabbath-keeper's week, and Sabbath-keeping."[38]

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[36] Barbara Baker Speedling, "Celebrating Sabbath as a Holistic Health Practice: The Transformative Power of a Sanctuary in Time," *Journal of Religion and Health* 58, no. 4 (August 2019): 1382, http://dtl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/docview/2206827867?accountid=202487.

[37] Speedling, "Celebrating Sabbath as a Holistic Health Practice," 1382.

[38] Speedling, "Celebrating Sabbath as a Holistic Health Practice," 1389.

To highlight two of the benefits—improved self-care and enriched relationships—Speedling concludes this from her research: "Each woman reported that her Sabbath improved her self-care whether it was as an antidote to burnout or a way to prevent it. Several co-researchers mentioned they felt more rested."[39] Many people in our communities experience burnout and have to keep going. According to her research, these women experienced Sabbath as an antidote to being burnt-out. Speedling shares that "Sabbath provided unrushed time and space to nurture relationships. Several women spoke about how a break from technology helped them be more present to others including spouses, partners, children, and friends. Feeling less stressed also benefited coresearchers' relationships."[40] One finds ultimate happiness in one's relationships with people and not through an attachment to material possessions. Many who worship at the 'church of work' often lack the desired familial relationships and Sabbath was shown to be more present in the home.

Conclusion

Some of the benefits outlined above from Speedling had no direct reference to spirituality. Sabbath is not just a spiritual benefit, but a human benefit as well. The body can and should enjoy taking a break from a constant barrage of labor. Abraham Heschel notes that "Unlike the Day of Atonement, the Sabbath is not dedicated exclusively to spiritual goals. It is a day of the soul as well as of the body; comfort and pleasure are an integral part of the Sabbath observance. Man in his entirety, all his faculties must share

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[39] Speedling, "Celebrating Sabbath as a Holistic Health Practice," 1389.

[40] Speedling, "Celebrating Sabbath as a Holistic Health Practice," 1389.

its blessing."[41] The purpose of this chapter was to explore to what degree the idea of Sabbath can contribute to one's overall health, albeit physical, mental, and spiritual. In the twenty-first century, the culture of American life is one of production and consumerism where persons significantly neglect spending intentional time dedicated to family, friends, and the pursuit of personal fulfillment.

This chapter sought to explore a theology of Sabbath primarily through the lens of noted biblical scholar and theologian Walter Brueggemann. This chapter ultimately argues it that may not be practical nor possible to devote a full twenty-four hours each week for Sabbath as Genesis and Deuteronomy prescribe. While that may not be possible, one should consider intentionally devoting a portion of time every week for a sabbath. This must be a non-negotiable for one's overall quality of life. Clergy, who have influence over a congregation, should model this kind of responsible behavior in front of their congregations. Congregations typically follow the example of their clergy and if clergy push the spiritual practice of Sabbath not only in word but in deed, culture has the potential to change to the extent that it will affect generations to come.

Sabbath as a spiritual foundation to stand upon will improve a person's quality of life. Enacting time and space to implement this theological principle is the challenging part; however, it is worth the sacrifice. Each principle that has been shared so far has a spiritual foundation perspective. While spiritual foundation is very important, there are other disciplines that hold equal value as foundation to stand upon. In the next chapter, an interdisciplinary approach in the health and wellness field will be explored pushing the narrative along further.

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[41] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York, NY: Noonday Press, 1951), 18.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

For the purposes of this chapter, public health is the discipline of study of focus. The purpose for this chapter is to support the theme of this doctoral project, which is a "Paradigm Shift: A Model for Clergy and Congregations to Partner and Adopt Holistic Approaches to Health and Wellness." The purpose for this chapter is also to support the research project that was implemented at Advent United Church of Christ in Columbus, Ohio. The research program was called the "Inside Out Health Initiative." There are four theories to explore within the discipline of public health, and out of the four, this chapter will decide between two theories to explore: the Health Belief Model and the transtheoretical model. Persons primarily use the Health Belief Model to determine possible health outcomes based upon an individual's belief system. This theory was used to promote health as well as in prevention of disease programs.

Another theory within the public health discipline is the transtheoretical model. The transtheoretical model primarily focuses on how individuals begin to change behaviors for their benefit, and that is an intentional process. Wayne W. LaMorte writes that "The Transtheoretical model operates on the assumption that people do not change

behaviors quickly and decisively. Rather, change in behavior, especially habitual behavior, occurs continuously through a cyclical process."[1]

This chapter focuses on the transtheoretical model because it provides insight into the thought process behind how people begin to change and adopt new behaviors for better outcomes in their lives. If clergy and congregations align with each other and unite under one purpose, which is to develop the whole person, not only will this approach effect their personal lives, but it will potentially change the communities as well. clergy visiting at the bedside of the sick and exhibiting a ministry of presence is a common accepted practice within the church. While present, it is customary for clergy to offer prayers and sacraments to the individuals and their families. This is applicable to both the younger and older generations within the congregation. As a part of the human experience, any member of a congregation is susceptible to becoming ill, whether they are personally at fault, or due to no fault of their own. Illnesses affects not only the physical body but affect persons mentally and spiritually as well. Likewise, just as a member of a congregation is susceptible to illness, so too is the clergyperson elected to serve the congregation.

Incorporating self-care practices into his or her life is imperative for the clergyperson. Many clergy—not all—by nature are caregivers who inherited a belief that God and the church requires a special degree of sacrifice. Perhaps not in word, but in action, many clergy embody a model of God, ministry, and family (self). This chapter calls for a paradigm shift so that persons avoid the trap of sacrificing one's health, family,

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[1] Wayne W. LaMorte, "The Transtheoretical Model (Stages of Change)," Boston University School of Public Health, https://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/mph-modules/sb/behavioralchangetheories/BehavioralChangeTheories6.html.

and overall quality of life for the sake of service to God or the people. Perhaps, a better model to exemplify is God, family, and then ministry. Clergy and congregations alike share in the stress of managing life, and everything that comes along with it has the potential to take a mental, spiritual, and physical toll on one's health. By studying public health, both clergy and congregations alike will benefit from information public health offers. Congregations need to have the confidence that their clergyperson is not just committed to their spiritual well-being but is also concerned and has a vested interest in their total person. Likewise, where possible, the clergyperson ought to have the confidence that members within the congregation are just as concerned about her or his overall wellness and development.

By exploring public health in the congregational setting and by shining a spotlight on the transtheoretical model, it is helpful to examine and understand pre-existing behaviors amongst clergypersons and members within the congregation as it relates to health. The transtheoretical model begins with the assumption that people—clergy or members—often fail to change behavior unless they are at point of resignation and are willing to do so. With this basic understanding, it would be helpful to have an evidence-based research tool to examine how people adopt new behaviors. This theory will have a significant impact on developing strategies for meaningful implementation.

The agenda is to shift the paradigm between clergypersons and congregations. If clergypersons and congregations partner together, and collectively incorporate new behaviors into the fabric of their livelihood, doing so will improve and enhance their overall quality of life. If ministries operated with a public health mindset, both clergy and congregants will have to undergo a process of systemic behavioral change to move

towards health and wellness. The discipline of public health and the transtheoretical theory will provide insight and a potential strategy to implement the "Inside Out Body Transformation Health Initiative" at the Advent United Church of Christ. Through this discipline and theory, the project will ascertain if participants desire to adopt health and new behaviors over the long haul.

Why choose public health as a discipline to explore? How does the Black church fit within this area of study? What is the relationship between public health and the stated project above have to do with the Advent United Church of Christ in particular? The Center for Disease Control (CDC) Foundation provides the following information:

> Public Health is the science of protecting and improving the health of people and their communities. This work is achieved by promoting healthy lifestyles, researching disease and injury prevention, and detecting, preventing and responding to infectious diseases. Overall, public health is concerned with protecting the health of entire populations.[2]

The overall purpose of this project — "A Paradigm Shift: A Model to Challenge Clergy and Congregations to Adopt a Holistic Approach to Health and Wellness"—is in sync with the vision and mission of what public health is all about as articulated by the CDC Foundation. The project at its core is oriented toward prevention. As this project encourages clergy and congregants to adopt healthier behaviors, the hope is that it will prevent and limit disparities and promote optimal health as much as possible.

The Black church stands in a unique position to address health disparities within itself and the community. Within the United Church of Christ denomination, Advent is the only African American church in Columbus, Ohio. The Black church exhibited a lengthy history of improving not only the spiritual wellbeing, but through direct action,

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[2] Center for Disease Control Foundation, "Public Health in Action," Center for Disease Control Foundation, https://www.cdcfoundation.org/what-public-health.

the physical, socioeconomic, political, and other concerns that affect the African American community as well. Jeffrey S. Levin writes on the subject that

> The black church is the most important social institution in the black community and is the conservator of the black ethos...there is historical precedent for viewing the black church as a locus for the delivery of social welfare...these fundamental assertions suggest a compatibility between the therapeutic role of the black church and the mission of community medicine.[3]

The Black church stands as a pillar within the African American community, and clergy and congregations partnering together in health and wellness will significantly impact the rest of the community in a positive way. As mentioned above, within the public health discipline, it was my choice to explore to what degree the transtheoretical model fits within the context of this project. The overall objective is to explore if participants are willing to adopt new healthy behaviors into their lifestyle. The theory that this chapter explores more specifically is the transtheoretical model. This theory "explains an individual's readiness to change their behavior. It describes the process of behavior change as occurring in stages."[4] The emphasis here is on 'readiness' to change. When it comes to this project, there are no pre-existing assumptions that participants are ready for a lifestyle change. Changes that people make in general, personal health for example, are changes that undergo a process. For long-lasting change, a well-thought-out mental process is something in which each person must engage. James O. Prochaska, Colleen A. Redding, and Kerry E. Evers write of their research subjects that "They revealed that behavior change unfolds through a series of stages, with different change processes used

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[3] Jeffrey S. Levin, "The Role of the Black Church in Community Medicine," *Journal of the National Medical Association* 76, no. 5 (1984): 479.

[4] Rural Health Information Hub, "Stages of Change Model (Transtheoretical Model)," Rural Health Information Hub, https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/health-promotion/2/theories-and-models/stages-of-change.

at different stages. This profound insight changed the course of our research and led to development of the Transtheoretical Model."[5] The stages of this theory include:

> Pre-contemplation: There is no intent on taking action. Contemplation: There are intentions to act and a plan to do so soon. Preparation: There is intention to act, and some steps have been taken. Action: Behavior has been changed for a short period of time. Maintenance: Behavior has been changed and continues to be maintained for the long-term. Termination: There is no desire to return to prior negative behaviors.[6]

This project will educate each participant about this process of change, and over the course of the project—through surveys—participants will access where they believe they are in the process. The project will also communicate that change is not linear, but there are moments where persons move differently through each of them. The transtheoretical model provides new insights into the type of person who is ready for an actual change in behavior. After conducting an assessment, participants in the pre-contemplation and contemplation stages are typically not ready to act in programs, such as health, for approximately six months. Participants who are in the preparation stage are more willing and likely to take direct action and implement behavior change within the month.

Prochaska, Redding, and Evers write that "Precontemplation is the stage in which people do not intend to take action in there near term, usually measured as the next six months. People may in this stage because they are not informed enough about the consequences of their behavior."[7] These authors also add that "People in contemplation

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[5] James O. Prochaska, Colleen A. Redding, and Kerry E. Evers, "The Transtheoretical Model and Stages of Change," in *Health Behavior: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 5th ed., eds. Karen Glanz, Barbara K. Rimer, and K. Viswanath (San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass, 2015), 126.

[6] Rural Health Information Hub, "Stages of Change Model (Transtheoretical Model)," Rural Health Information Hub, https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/health-promotion/2/theories-and-models/stages-of-change.

[7] Prochaska, Redding, and Evers, "The Transtheoretical Model and Stages of Change," 127.

intend to change their behaviors in the next six months. They are more aware of the pros of changing than pre-contemplators and are also acutely aware of the cons."[8] Prochaska, Redding, and Evers also write that "In the preparation stage, people intend to take action soon, usually measured as the next month.....They have a plan of action, such as joining a quit smoking health education class, consulting a counselor, talking to their physician, buying a self-help book, or relying on a self-change approach."[9]

Participants will enter at varying stages along the process. No one will be discouraged if they desire to participate. This will be the case even if individuals find themselves in the Pre-contemplation or Contemplation stage; however, keeping this information in hand is helpful. While the transtheoretical model established a solid foundation as it pertains to the process of change in behavior, it however has its limitations. The age of the participants and culture, for example, play a role in measuring outcomes. At the same time, "Although the transtheoretical Model has been applied across at least forty-eight behaviors and populations from many countries, the model has limitations. It might be assumed that TTM does not apply very well to children and adolescents. There is a basic question regarding the age at which intentional behavior change begins."[10] In order to predict behavior, the child's mentality is too unpredictable to make substantive claims over definitive changed behavior. Likewise, one system or process is not exhaustive to encompass a one-size-fits-all perspective when it comes to culture. In fact, "Given the global application of TTM, it will be important to determine

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[8] Prochaska, Redding, and Evers, "The Transtheoretical Model and Stages of Change," 127.

[9] Prochaska, Redding, and Evers, "The Transtheoretical Model and Stages of Change," 127.

[10] Prochaska, Redding, and Evers, "The Transtheoretical Model and Stages of Change," 141.

the cultures in which TTM can be applied effectively and the cultures for which it may require major adaptations."[11]

Another article posits that there are at least four more reasons to disavow the transtheoretical model and transition to another system. The overall point is that there are no perfect or exhaustive systems as it pertains to behavioral change and there will also be limitations with each one. Robert West writes the following:

> First of all, the model is flawed even in its most basic tenet, the concept of the 'stage.' It has to draw arbitrary dividing lines in order to differentiate between the stages. Secondly, this approach to classifying individuals assumes that individuals typically make coherent and stable plans. Thirdly, it has been pointed out by others that the stage definitions represent a mixture of different types of construct that do not fit together coherently (e.g. time since quit, past quit attempts and intention). Fourthly, the model focuses on conscious decision-making and planning processes and draws attention away from what are known to be important underpinnings of human motivation.[12]

In this next phase of the project, my objective is to delve into how the discipline of Public Health and the transtheoretical model intersect with each of the previous chapters including the biblical, historical, and theological chapters. The theological chapter discusses a theological approach to Sabbath as seen primarily through the lens of biblical scholar and theologian Walter Brueggemann. Sabbath is not just a spiritual benefit but contains mental and physical benefits as well. The body can and should enjoy a break from a constant barrage of labor. The purpose of the theological foundation was to explore the degree to which the idea of Sabbath would contribute to one's overall health—one's physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. In the twenty-first century, the

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[11] Prochaska, Redding, and Evers, "The Transtheoretical Model and Stages of Change," 141.

[12] Robert West, "Time for Change: Putting the Transtheoretical (Stages of Change) Model to Rest," *Addiction* 100, no. 8 (June 15, 2005): 1036-1037, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1360-0443.2005.01139.x.

culture of American life is one of production and consumerism, where persons significantly neglect spending intentional time dedicated to family, friends, and the pursuit of personal fulfillment.

Theological

As it pertains to clergy and congregations, how can one view Sabbath through the lens of Public Health, and is it possible to consider changing behavior through the transtheoretical model? Are clergy and congregations willing to partner together and consider Sabbath as a viable option to their overall health and wellness? Are both parties able to see the importance of Sabbath, not only for clergy and members within the congregation, but also for the overall wellbeing of the ministry itself? The Bible records Jesus pulling away or withdrawing unto a solitary place several points throughout his ministry. This practice of withdrawing unto a solitary place, intentionally taking weekly or consistent periods of time for a Sabbath's rest, will benefit everyone involved.

A question that one could posed is this: how can the transtheoretical model of change apply to both clergy and congregations that are presented with the concept of incorporating Sabbath into their lives? Sabbath is a weekly cessation from all work and being reflective over the mighty works of Elohim. Sabbath is a biblical principle first introduced in the creation narrative of Genesis, and throughout the rest of the Pentateuch the idea or concept of sabbath has evolved over time. Clergy and members within the congregation alike both have challenges with incorporating rest or sabbath into their lives. There are clergy, for example, who are bi-vocational, maintain family, and have desires to pursue personal goals; however, having opportunity to create space for Sabbath

and rest is limited. There are members within the congregation who live busy lives as well, trying to appropriately balance work, bills, children, extra curricula activities, and aging parents; however, having opportunity to create Sabbath or rest is limited. What does Sabbath look like for clergy who desire change? What does Sabbath look like for the member of the congregation who desires change? Can the transtheoretical model of change apply to their situation?

The first stage of the transtheoretical model is called precontemplation. According to Speedling, "Precontemplation is the stage in which people do not intend to take action in there near term, usually measured as the next six months. People may in this stage because they are not informed enough about the consequences of their behavior."[13] The precontemplation stage is where many people begin. This is where the model introduces them to the idea and makes them aware that Sabbath needs to be a part of their lives. However, oftentimes persons place Sabbath on the back burner and the mentality could be, "I will get to it later." Concluding that far too many individuals are unaware of the potential life changing benefits of Sabbath is plausible. However, concluding that the opposite is true is possible as well; that there are potential devastating consequences for not incorporating Sabbath into one's life.

The second stage is contemplation, and within this stage, there is an expressed intent within a certain time frame. Individuals gather the necessary information, can make an informed decision, and weigh the positive and negative consequences. There are notable benefits to incorporating Sabbath into one's lifestyle. Speedling also states that

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[13] Barbara Baker Speedling, "Celebrating Sabbath as a Holistic Health Practice: The Transformative Power of a Sanctuary in Time," *Journal of Religion and Health* 58, no. 4 (August 2019): 1389, http://dtl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/docview/2206827867?accountid=202487.

"Sabbath-keeping enhanced self-awareness, improved self-care, enriched relationships, developed spirituality, positively affected the rest of a Sabbath-keeper's week, and Sabbath-keeping."[14] These benefits connected to Sabbath can be listed in the thought process as clergy and congregations contemplate incorporating this spiritual principle into their lives.

The third stage is known as the preparation stage. In the preparation stage, after acquiring information, a person decides and takes some steps to implement the stated goals. To incorporate sabbath's rest, persons must have an intentional approach. Both clergy and congregations alike must implement a strategy to fuse this new behavior into how persons live every day. Clergy must be exemplars of this reality and model responsible behavior in front of the congregation. The fourth stage in this theory, is the action stage. The action stage is self-explanatory. A full implementation of the goal is underway, and participants start to experience the benefits and potential consequences. When clergy and congregations partner together to implement Sabbath, they take such actions include a shutdown of the church on a particular day, the clergy person allows another minister to deliver the sermon on Sunday or bible study in order to spend time with family. These are example of action steps taken by the clergy person. The same is true with the congregation. Examples of actions that individuals may take include intentionally pulling away from carting children "to and fro," technology, and household chores for a time in order to spend quality time alone or with family.

The fifth stage of this theory is the maintenance phase where persons implement behaviors for a season. Within this phase there is also potential for a relapse, or a return

[14] Speedling, "Celebrating Sabbath as a Holistic Health Practice," 1388.

to behaviors prior to the newly instituted behaviors. Persons continually make the effort to regroup and recommit to the journey. As it pertains to Sabbath, maintaining this spiritual principle can be challenging and it will be interesting to see how clergy and congregations alike can be consistent applying the principle of rest to their lives. The final stage of the transtheoretical theory is termination. In this phase, the individual went through all the steps and reached a conclusion that there is no desire to return to the individual's previous behaviors or way of life.

Historical

As this chapter continues to delve into how the discipline of public health and the transtheoretical model intersect with each of the previous chapters including the biblical, historical, and theological chapters, this section focuses on the historical foundation. Jonathan Edwards was one of the most prolific thinkers, writers, and producers of scholarship in the early eighteenth century. He was an American revivalist preacher, philosopher, and congregationalist protestant theologian. Edwards is widely regarded as one of America's most important and original philosophical theologians of his time even into the present. History firmly establishes him in the eighteenth century as one of the pioneers for the revival in the English colonies known as the Great Awakening. One primary focus that the historical chapter previously examined was the need to examine a few paradigms that needed shifting. In other words, there was a mentality and belief structure that he embodied, which caused conflict within the immediate family, personal health, and ministry. A paradigm is an accepted way of thinking inherited from previous generations and societal norms.

Every generation is born into a cultural context with a set of cultural norms to which one can choose to adhere. Although societal norms are widely accepted and embraced, an individual does not have to accept such practices and can make a shift in perspective. There are consequences—both positive and negative—to such an approach; however, societal norms that reinforce harm to an individual or a community, should be resisted and ultimately changed. Jonathan Edwards was a product of the times and his environment; unfortunately, however, he maintained the orthodox view of thinking surrounding the issue of slavery, held a conflicted devotion to spirituality over and against his family, and maintained an unbalanced approach towards his personal health.

Regarding public health, for example, Jonathan Edwards had an unbalanced approach towards his personal health because his devotion to work and service outweighed his decision to make choices more in favor of his health. Towards the end of his life, Jonathan Edwards was presented with the opportunity to become the president of Princeton College, formerly the College of New Jersey. Although this was a tremendous opportunity to serve in an academic climate, Jonathan Edwards was very hesitant to accept this newfound position. The college reached out to Jonathan Edwards, and he declined the initial offer due to his health. Marsden informs readers that

> The first was the matter of his physical health. He described his 'peculiar unhappy' constitution in a way that suggests chronic poor digestion resulting in low spirits, 'childish weakness and contemptibleness of speech, presence, demeanor; with a disagreeable dullness and stiffness, much unfitting me for conversation, but more especially for the government of a college.[15]

In other words, Jonathan Edwards was not in good health nor well enough to become the president of a college and give it its due diligence. Not long after he accepted the position

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[15] George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 430.

of president of the college, Johnathan Edwards died after contracting smallpox. Public health has much to contribute to his situation and that of the broader community. Jonathan Edwards acknowledged that he had several comorbidities affecting his health prior to encountering smallpox. In fact, because of his underlying health conditions, it is plausible to conclude that his body was not sufficiently conditioned to fight off the virus. Mark Barna writes that "People with pre-existing health conditions may have less resilience."[16] One can glean from his experience and others the importance of taking a proactive approach to health and wellness so that when and if a disaster occurs, the physical body can stand in an optimal position to fight and recover. Barna adds that "Healthy people who experience a disaster can more readily recover than those who have health conditions."[17]

Having the ability to apply this theory to Jonathan Edwards, if he saw how he could include certain lifestyle changes and avoid some things possibly had the potential of prolonging his life. Jonathan Edwards embodied a behavior where the pursuit of completing several collections of notebooks and serving as president of an institution he initially declined, contributed to his decline and ultimate demise. If he considered and implemented another option, the transtheoretical model would assist him in making lifestyle changes. Harvard Women's Health Watch reports that "Even after a setback such as a stroke, lifestyle can make a difference...moreover, the more healthy behaviors that participants embraced (for example, eating five or more daily servings of fruits and

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[16] Mark Barna, "Healthy People More Resilient in Disasters," *The Nation's Health* 51, no. 1 (February/March 2021): 5, *Gale Academic OneFile*, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A652003735/AONE?u=upl1179&sid=AONE&xid=5ac938f7.

[17] Barna, "Healthy People More Resilient in Disasters," 5.

vegetables in addition to exercising and not smoking), the lower their death rate for all causes."[18]

Change is difficult for any human being, and at this season in Jonathan Edwards' life, he was in his fifties. Introducing him to this model of change would require time to implement on a consistent basis. There are several levels within the model and, no matter the situation, one enters each stage depending on the season of an individual's life. The Harvard Women's Health Watch also informs readers that "Research has shown that you will rarely progress through the stages of change in a straightforward, linear way."[19]

Biblical

The public health discipline and the transtheoretical model is not limited to any one discipline. This chapter attempts to show its relevance to theology, history, and one can also view public health and the transtheoretical model through a biblical or faith perspective as well. The bible is full of examples that uplift the health of the community and consistently encourages individuals as well to adopt healthier behaviors. In our specific context, we previously examined the Apostle Paul and his perspective on the physical body. As we dissected his thesis, we concluded that the Apostle Paul identifies appropriate behaviors for the Christian community in Corinth. The Apostle Paul holds to the belief that the human body should be singularly engaged in a particular way, and if

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[18] Harvard Women's Health Watch, "Why Behavior Change is Hard – And Why You Should Keep Trying," Harvard Health Publishing, March 2012, https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/why-behavior-change-is-hard-and-why-you-should-keep-trying.

[19] Harvard Women's Health Watch, "Why Behavior Change is Hard," https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/why-behavior-change-is-hard-and-why-you-should-keep-trying.

used out of this context, the actions of the individual and community would be deemed as inappropriate and misused.

In 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, the Apostle Paul shines a spotlight on his interpretation of what is and what is not appropriate sexual expression. The Apostle Paul, based on the scriptural reference in Genesis, which suggests that by engaging in sex, male and female would unite and becomes one flesh. The text in Genesis is written with a traditional interpretation of marriage or a committed relationship; however, the context of sexual expression in the Corinthian context is when one engages in sex with a prostitute. The principle still carries over; whether married or single, if an individual engages with a prostitute, that individual would become one flesh with that person. Uniting with a prostitute is problematic for the Apostle Paul because he views the body as a member of Christ and humanity should unite with the Lord instead.

Faith or spirituality is very important and there should not be a major conflict when inserting public health into the conversation. What is needed and even more so helpful, is when physicians and clergy acknowledge and affirm the validity of health and how the two can coincide peacefully. Tom Fryers, a public health physician, acknowledges this reality and affirms how this is important. John Cox, Alastair V. Campbell, and Bill Fulford write that "Tom Fryers, an experienced British public health physician, shows the importance of spirituality even, and not least, in the health-economics dominated disciplines of public health."[20] These authors also report the following: "Thus body, mind and spirit are inextricably linked in the whole person."[21] As

[20] John Cox, Alastair V. Campbell, and Bill Fulford, *Medicine of the Person: Faith, Science, and Values in Health Care Provision* (London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006), 26.

[21] Cox, Campbell, and Fulford, *Medicine of the Person*, 171.

it relates to the Apostle Paul, who represents spirituality, one should treat the body with high regard and respect. One should view the body as a temple; it is a building that houses the most precious gift of all—the Holy Spirit.

Keeping this in mind, since the body is a temple and treated with the upmost high regard and respect, whether through sexual expression or other means, one should treat the human body in a responsible way because of the spiritual gift that dwells within. The human body ought then to operate in an optimal healthy way so that the gift inside can continue to be nourished and the individual or community can maximize carrying out the desires of the divine. Since the body is considered a temple, it is the responsibility of stewards to govern themselves accordingly; it is the responsibility of the individual to maintain and ensure the human body operates optimally and efficiently.

From this perspective, treating the human body as a temple and with the utmost respect is not in conflict with the public health agenda. In fact, the two coincide and weave together harmoniously. Acknowledging that there is understandably some hesitancy for medical or public health officials to venture out and speak on spiritual matters is important. Cox, Campbell, and Fulford write these words: "Since I was a student in the 1950s, doctors have become far more honest and open, far more willing to reveal the diagnosis and prognosis to patients and to discuss options for intervention and action, though few, I think, venture into spiritual issues."[22] Spiritual dialogue can be challenging, especially from the standpoint of a medical professional; however, more and more medical and public health professionals are becoming open to affirming and addressing the whole person rather than just the physical. *Medicine of the Person* also

[22] Cox, Campbell, and Fulford, *Medicine of the Person*, 179.

notes that "Of particular importance are the spiritual needs concerning self-esteem, relationships with others and relationship with God. Good doctors with a perception of whole person care will often recognize this and will want to offer help at a deeper level."[23]

If people are willing to adopt new behaviors, public health and the transtheoretical model can provide a foundation upon which faith and medicine can partner with each other. If clergy, members within the congregation, and even public health officials were willing to see how their respective paths crossed, "the TTM specifically offers a framework for providing support to individuals through the various stages of change…"[24] As clergy, it is important to help members within the congregation to see how their physical health is of absolute value and that it will not only affect them personally, but will greatly contribute and influence other members within the family and eventually the community.

To improve the overall health of the congregation and community, clergy and congregations must partner together and make it a reality. Before introducing public health officials to the church, clergy and congregations need to have the much-needed conversation. Clergy must be willing to concede that faith and medicine are not antithetical to each other but can complement one another. In other words, while prayer and scripture reading are essential, professional medical interventions are just as essential

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[23] Cox, Campbell, and Fulford, *Medicine of the Person*, 180-181.

[24] Robin M. White, "Application of the Transtheoretical Model: Assessing Exercise Behavior in African Americans in a Church-Based Setting" (PhD diss., University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2014), 40, https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3313&context=thesesdissertations.

to the health and wellness of the entire person. This process of understanding is difficult for some, but the transtheoretical model provides a way to process emotion and behavior.

Scientific Model

This chapter places public health and the transtheoretical model in conversation with Bible, history, and theology. Another thought to consider involves science and faith, and how these relate to the overall project, which is "A Paradigm Shift: A Model to Challenge Clergy and Congregations to Adopt a Holistic Approach to Health and Wellness." How can science and faith contribute to the conversation and make the theme of the project stronger? There are four models of understanding when it comes to science and religion; however, this chapter only chooses one model. The four models in the scientific model are: conflict, interdependence, dialogue, and integration.

The conflict model speaks to the notion that science and religion are in direct contradiction to one another and there is little to no room for dialogue. The next model is interdependence, and this model speaks to the idea that both perspectives have valid truths and are legitimate in their own right; however, the two are not permitted to interact with one another, thus resulting in not much room for dialogue. The third perspective, and one that is noteworthy, is the dialogue model. This model affirms the reality that science and religion not only can coexist and cohabitate the same space, but to address certain truths and challenges both can dialogue and partner with each other. The final model is that of integration. The integration model affirms what other models denied, and that is a cohesion, a bringing together, or a merging of the two, as they share truth and contribute to the greater good.

The chosen model is the integration model, as this model more closely aligns with the project theme. Even within the integration model, there are three subcategories that break down the model even further: Natural Theology, Theology of Nature, and Systemic Synthesis. Theology of Nature is appreciated because it does not start from science as the foundation, but rather and instead, this perspective shines a spotlight and affirms religious experiences. This concept not only advocates for religious experiences, but also advocates for persons to reevaluate some teachings. According to Barbour, "A theology of nature does not start from science, as natural theology usually does today. Instead, it starts from a religious tradition based on religious experiences and historical revelation. But it holds that some traditional doctrines need to be reformulated in the light of current science."[25]

Paradigms shifting and persons attempting to advocate for a universal rethinking of some practices and pedagogy (teaching) within the church is imperative. Religion and science, especially in the context of health and wellness, can not only coexist, but can be fully integrated with each other. Both are needed to inform and contribute to the conversation. As mentioned previously, clergy (faith) and medical professionals (science) can play a key role in providing treatment for and informing the whole person, instead of retreating to one side. Typically, clergy's primary role relates to the spiritual, while the physician's primary concern is physical, thus limiting humanity to spirit or the physical body. Humanity includes spiritual, mental, and physical components. A cancer patient, for example, is likely to take the scientific approach: chemo, radiation, medication, and surgery; however, there is more to that cancer patient than just his or her illness. A

[25] Ian G. Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers, or Partners* (San Francisco, CA: Harper One, 2000), 31.

spiritual background, family, friends, purpose, and a host of other things contribute to the quality of life for that individual and collectively these components have the potential to extend life.

In this project, the health and wellbeing of clergy and congregations are paramount, and science and faith share an intimate and integrated role. Participants in the project will seek counsel from mental health professionals and utilize scientific evidence-based tools provided to equip the participant for a better quality of life. Participants will utilize scientific and evidence-based tools provided by a professional trainer and nutritionist to adequately nourish and exercise the body. In addition to mental and physical care, participants will also receive spiritual support from clergy and receive prayer, scripture readings, devotions, and encouragement to contribute to the participants quality of life as well. This project will utilize the transtheoretical model, which attempts to address participants readiness to modify behavior and incorporate new principles into one's lifestyle. Oftentimes referred to as the 'change model,' the project will assess participants \to see where they fall on the spectrum of change, which will determine if they are willing to make significant adjustments to live a healthier lifestyle.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this interdisciplinary foundation studies the discipline of public health. Public health is a science that intentionally focuses and targets the community while seeking to protect and promote health and prevent disease in order to improve quality of life. Public health, when carried out effectively and efficiently, promotes and protects the wellbeing of the entire community, especially communities with lesser

resources. As previously stated, embedded within public health are four theories explored within this discipline, and out of the four, this chapter debates two theories: the Health Belief Model and the transtheoretical model. Persons use the Health Belief Model theory to determine possible health outcomes based upon an individual's belief system. This theory was used to promote health as well as in prevention of diseases programs. Another theory within the public health discipline is the transtheoretical model. The transtheoretical model primarily focuses on how individuals begin to change behaviors for their benefit, and this is an intentional process. LaMorte writes that "The Transtheoretical model operates on the assumption that people do not change behaviors quickly and decisively. Rather, change in behavior, especially habitual behavior, occurs continuously through a cyclical process."[26]

This chapter focuses on the transtheoretical model because this theory provided insight into the thought process behind how people begin to change and adopt new behaviors for better outcomes in their lives. As previously asserted, if clergy and congregations align with each other and unite under one purpose, which is to develop the whole person, not only will this approach effect their personal lives, but potentially the communities to which they are connected as well. The transtheoretical theory is a process of change and this project will explore this theory in the congregational setting as participants engage in a health initiative. This chapter examined this theory and discipline and placed it in conversation with the Apostle Paul and his perspective on the human body as a temple of the Holy Spirit. For the church at Corinth to change behavior, Paul argues that they must be willing to submit to a process of change.

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[26] LaMorte, "Behavior Change Models," https://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/mph-modules/sb/behavioralchangetheories/BehavioralChangeTheories6.html.

This chapter examined this theory and placed it in conversation with Jonathan Edwards, a historical figure, and how his conflicted devotion between family and faith would be a great cause for behavior change in the modern world. Many clergy, for example, share similar struggles as the attempt to balance service to the church and family. Finally, this chapter examined this theory and discipline and placed in conversation with a theological perspective on Sabbath. The process of change and incorporating rest into our lives can be very difficult; however, if one desires a healthier lifestyle, change is necessary.

The following chapter embraces all the approaches discussed thus far and places the principles discussed into a research project held at the Advent United Church of Christ. The next chapter unfolds the structure, strategy, and the results of the surveys carried out in the beginning and end of the program. The next chapter also examines whether the hypothesis was proven accurately or inaccurately.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

I started at the United Theological Seminary in the fall semester of 2019. For the years leading up starting the program, I focused on one subject matter to pursue for the doctoral program and that subject was clergy sexual abuse. The area of clergy sexual abuse provided energy for me ever since the second semester of my first year in graduate school at Princeton Theological Seminary. My original intent was to explore the area of grief as it relates to family of the clergyperson who violates that sacred trust. The grief of the victims of clergy sexual abuse is great and I wondered what grief looks like as it relates to the clergyperson's family. The reality is that the family, who is also kept in the dark in most instances, suffers grief through embarrassment, the loss of a church community, turmoil in the home regarding the children, and potential divorce within the marriage. I carried this passion in my soul for sixteen years. However, during my first semester at United Theological Seminary, I had a devastating and life-altering health event and little did I know, this health scare would change the trajectory of my life's journey forever.

Thursday evening, around 7:30 p.m., on November 14, 2019, I had a massive heart attack at the age of forty-one years old. I had an eighty percent blockage in my left coronary artery and one hundred percent blockage in my right coronary artery. This was totally unexpected especially since I ate relatively well and exercised on a consistent

basis. I am so grateful to be alive. This feeling was like my heart was set on fire—a major and tremendous burning. At the time, I was unaware that it was a heart attack. I thought it perhaps was severe heart burn. I wanted to go home to relax and be still. I now know that if I went home, I would have died. I am grateful to the Lord for sparing my life because my story could have ended very differently. I am grateful to my wife who refused to listen to me and immediately took me to the hospital. I am grateful to my children, mother, brothers, and all who prayed for me during this difficult season. I am grateful to my church, Advent United Church of Christ, who lifted me up and cautioned me upon my return several months later.

My second semester at United Theological Seminary, I sat in the Gardner C. Taylor Scholars' cohort and the Holy Spirit shared with me that it was time to change the direction of my doctoral work from clergy sexual abuse and transition to health and wellness for clergy and congregations. I was nervous about bringing this to the attention of my mentors and cohort colleagues, but when it was my turn to present and share my reasoning for the change, all of them provided enthusiastic support for the vision and affirmed the leading of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the rest of my studies, everything became a launching pad from this moment in time. The overall research project was birthed through each chapter and after each cohort discussion I was even more filled to push the envelope further.

The blending together of the research project and the overall written document afforded me the opportunity to enter conversation with a variety of disciplines that includes Bible, history, theology, and public health. My overall desire is to see genuine and much needed partnership between clergy and the congregations they have the

privilege to serve. I also desire to communicate the idea that relationship ought not be primarily one-sided, where the clergyperson contributes so much more than the congregation is willing to give or offer. Too many clergypersons sacrificed their personal health, family, personal goals, and aspirations, all in the name of service to God and the church. While noble and acknowledging that there will be an inevitable degree of sacrifice, one's personal life, health, and family should not come at the expense of such sacrifice. Placing a value on self-care is a principle that ought to be communicated and modeled in front of the congregation. Self-care is a value from which the congregation can benefit as well; therefore, the two should partner together in providing care for each other.

The biblical narrative is a major pillar upon which the dissertation and research project stands. My particular focus of study, as it relates to the physical body in health and wellness, brought me to the passage of 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. This passage places a spotlight on the Apostle Paul and how he expresses his perspective over what is the appropriate usage of the body. I contend that the Apostle Paul held the belief that the human body should be singularly engaged, and if used out of this context, everything else would be deemed as inappropriate and a misuse of the body. The Apostle Paul has a very conservative, limited, and 'strict' view of the physical body. As he writes, he views his body, as evidenced throughout many of his other epistles, through the lens of the actual body of Christ. Paul considers the sufferings Christ experienced, which Paul experienced, as something of note and aspirational.

The Apostle Paul shares how God is sovereign over everything, which includes the physical body. The motivation behind his teaching was his belief that the body

housed the most precious gift of all—the Holy Spirit—and as such, the body is transformed into the temple of God. Since the body is a temple, one should treat it with respect and high regard, and the body ought to then function in the most optimal way. One should not limit Paul's understanding of the body being viewed as a temple to sexual expression, but rather, we ought to live our lives in the healthiest of ways so that the body can operate in the most optimal way. If the body is to be viewed as a temple of the Holy Spirit, that should include mental health, physical health, and spiritual health as well. The Inside Out Health Initiative seeks to bring an awareness to the participants of this concept.

In addition to the Bible contributing a great deal to the overall project, history is another factor that helped inform this project. The historical figure that I explored was Jonathan Edwards. Although many view Jonathan Edwards as a great and towering figure in the early eighteenth century, he was also an individual with faults and failures, chief among which was his perspective of Africans and the Indigenous people of this land. History is an intentional peek into the past, and if we learn from events of old, it can help us build a better present and future. For example, as we press pause and take an intentional introspective look at our past, what paradigms need to be shifted, reexamined, or reevaluated? Jonathan Edwards, a clergyperson, learned the value of having a strong work ethic, but at what cost? He sacrificed significantly when it came to family and his own personal health.

This is relevant in 2021, especially among clergy, because many clergypersons have a deep desire and commitment to serve God and devote their lives towards this ideal. Serving people and improving their quality of life is important and worthy of praise

and affirmation. However, for too long clergypersons sacrificed their families and physical or mental health in the name of service to God. Does God really require one to sacrifice those things all to serve? Is this what God desires or is this our interpretation of what God desires for us? There are many children whose parents were and are clergy who fail to want to have anything to do with the church because they felt as if the church was more important. Is this what God wants? A well-known pastor informed me that "The wife never wants to admit that the church is the other woman." This was expressed in the context of why pastors need to spend so much time building the ministry of God at the church. He was divorced because of the ministry and "married to the church." Is this what God desires? There are many life lessons one can glean from his life and my perspective is that it is time for a paradigm shift within this generation and the next. Sacrificing family or our personal health to serve God is hazardous. This sentiment was expressed during the research project.

One of the principles that the health initiative will speak about is the spiritual concept of Sabbath. The theological foundation chapter seeks to explore a theology of Sabbath primarily through the lens of noted biblical scholar and theologian Walter Brueggemann and Patrick Miller. The ultimate argument is that it may not be practical or possible to devote a full twenty-four hours each week for a sabbath's rest. While this may not be possible, what one ought to consider is intentionally devoting a portion of time each week for a sabbath's rest. Clergy, who have influence over a congregation, ought to model this kind of responsible behavior in front of their congregations. Congregations typically follow the example of their clergypersons and if clergy push the spiritual

practice of Sabbath not only in word but in deed, the culture has the potential to change and that will affect generations to come.

As the research project communicates, Sabbath has a spiritual benefit and a human benefit as well. The body can and should enjoy taking a break from a constant barrage of labor. The purpose or the idea of Sabbath can contribute to one's overall health—physical, mental, and spiritual. In the twenty-first century, the culture of American life is one of production and consumerism where spending intentional time dedicated to family, friends, and the pursuit of personal fulfillment is significantly neglected.

This project also afforded me the opportunity to remove the project out of the sphere of religion and place it in dialogue with the secular realm as well. The interdisciplinary chapter focuses on public health as the discipline of study. Public health is a science that targets the community and seeks to promote overall health to improve the quality of life, especially in communities with lesser resources. In addition to the public health discipline, the chapter uses the Transtheoretical Theory model to explore how an individual can modify behavior for one's overall benefit. I chose the Transtheoretical Theory model because it provides insight into the behind-the-scenes thought process necessary to begin changing and adopting new behaviors for better outcomes. If clergy and congregations partner together and unite under one purpose, change is easier to grasp and incorporated as both parties understand the thought process of change. Change is an intentional act of will and must submit to a process.

Methodology

The title of the doctoral project is "Paradigm Shift: A Model for Clergy and Congregations to Partner and Adopt Holistic Approaches to Health and Wellness." A health and wellness program was created at the Advent United Church of Christ (UCC) in Columbus, Ohio, which is the congregation I am privileged to serve as co-pastor along with my wife. The program created was called the Inside Out Health Initiative. The purpose of this health initiative was to challenge and encourage the clergy and members of the Advent UCC to incorporate and adopt healthier behaviors into the culture of their lives. The objective was for the participants to focus simultaneously on internal and external ways one can be healthy for an overall better quality of life. The initiative focused on three areas that encompasses the whole person: spiritual, mental, and physical. The overarching goal from the outset of the program was not to lose weight. The aim was to explore to what degree would the participants make more informed choices and to see if they were willing to change behavior regarding their mental, spiritual, and physical wellbeing.

The Inside Out Health Initiative took place over seven weeks at the Advent UCC in Columbus, Ohio. I had a group of five context associates including three female and two males. The context associates were a mixture of members and leaders within the Advent UCC. The age range within the group was diverse as well, ranging from as young as thirty-six years old to around sixty-nine years old. For approximately six to eight months prior to the initiation of the research project, I met with the group two times a month over the platform of Zoom to plan for the research project. Each context associate

played an instrumental role in providing feedback, structure, and creative ways to implement the research project within the context of Advent UCC.

A few months prior to the launch of the Inside Out Health Initiative, through Zoom, the social media platform of Facebook, Bible study and at the conclusion of Sunday morning worship, I would give commercial snippets about the Health Initiative to create interest and potentially motivate people to adjust overall health. I would give these commercials approximately once per month, and the context associates would engage the congregation to also generate interest. Several months leading up to the project, a letter was sent to the entire congregation extending to them an official invitation to be a part of the Inside Out Health Initiative. The letter provided a general outline of how the program would be divided, the duration the Health Initiative would take, and how many individuals we would like to participate.

In the letter, we set a participant maximum number of twenty-five and each participant must be over the age of eighteen. The invitation was extended to both clergy and members of the church. I stress this dynamic because, the foundation of the Inside Out Health Initiative is to encourage partnership between both parties to live a healthy lifestyle. In terms of responsibility, I challenge clergy participants, as leaders within the congregation, to model responsible healthy behavior in front of the people. Asking the congregation to live a healthier lifestyle is inappropriate if the clergy or leaders are not willing to model responsible behavior in front of them.

Several members within the congregation responded to the initial letter that was mailed out to everyone; however, we still failed to get the numbers we desired. The context associates decided that they would ask a certain amount of people with whom

they had personal relationship. We decided as a group that we would target certain individuals who we believed would be open for the challenge and those who had previously made public their personal health concerns, such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and cancer. This approach proved successful as many individuals expressed excitement about needing that extra push to improve their overall quality of health. Excitement was in the air, and even after the deadline passed, a clergyperson within my context inquired if it was too late to participate. My original intent was to extend an invitation to clergy outside of my context, but I decided against it and chose to remain with the clergy within the congregation.

During the Health Initiative program, as a form of data collection, I used a mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative research. I measured the project primarily through the pre and post surveys. The survey questions were sent electronically to each of the participants email through the website Survey Monkey. More methods for the collection of data included journal entries. Each participant received a journal assigned with a corresponding number. No personal names were written in the journal and each participant was tasked with writing in the journal each week. Program participants were given instructions to reflect upon the subject material each week and whether the material was beneficial to their lives. Weekly focus groups were also a method of collecting data. During the focus group, topics were taught, and the floor was open for discussion with the program participants and the instructor. With the consent of program participants, focus groups were recorded for data gathering as well. In some cases, follow up interviews were conducted in the event someone was unable to consistently write in journal, or if an individual chose to engage in a different way. If a topic triggered a

participant with memories or certain feelings, evidenced by voluntary or involuntary body language or by noticeable or not noticeable withdrawal from the group, then that individual might request a follow up interview after the module concluded.

The creation of this program emerged from my own health context that caused me to almost lose my life. From this vantage point, as a clergyperson, I saw that I was no different than anyone else in the congregation. As I cast my gaze upon the congregation, I saw myself in them and just as many of them suffered mentally, physically, and spiritually, so likewise, I lacked mentally, physically, and spiritually. I saw it as my duty to create a program and partner with the congregation to pursue optimal health from the inside out. Identifying a problem is insufficient for me, rather it is my responsibility to do everything in my power to provide a solution and effect change.

I attempted to effect change throughout the program. The Inside Out Health Initiative met over a seven-week period. Initially, the program was scheduled for eight weeks, and through consultation, it was dropped down to six weeks. At the conclusion of the six weeks, there were more lessons that I wanted to share and requested permission for the program participants to come an extra or bonus week. Each week was broken up into three sections where we focused on mental, physical, and spiritual health. Weekly instruction was provided to the focus group; however, while we had a microcosm of the congregation represented, it was my desire to still expose the entire congregation to some of the content the program participants received.

The long-term vision for this decision is in alignment with my goals for the Health and Wellness Ministry at Advent United Church of Christ. As we take on the task of revamping the ministry, in time, health will be the lens through which we see and

perform ministry. By exposing the entire ministry to a snippet of the information, we plant and water the seeds for growth and trust that God will bring the increase. Each week throughout the program, a tailored-made sermon was offered each Sunday morning to address the topic at hand. For example, for two consecutive weeks, the focus was on mental health and as a result, for two consecutive Sundays, a sermon was preached on mental health. Since the program took place in August, which is the month Bible study is usually suspended, the focus groups were held during the Bible study time slot.

For the seven weeks, as the pastor I preached six out of the seven weeks on the designated topic, and my wife, the other pastor, preached one week. The focus group sessions were held on Wednesday evenings, and we had a total of six instructors, including myself and my wife. The other four instructors came from the community. The counselor is in private practice and is also a part of a local nonprofit health organization in Columbus, Ohio. One instructor, who is a personal trainer and nutritionist, owns her own business called Design Your Body Academy. Another instructor is a personal trainer and owns her own studio called Five Point Fitness. Our final instructor works at the Ohio State Medical Center and specifically works with individuals who need cardiac rehab support.

Each week, the program participants received top notch support and information from qualified individuals who are experts in their fields and the everyone is the better for it. Each one of the instructors sacrificed personal time and came to impart knowledge and wisdom into each of the participants outside of normal work hours. I appreciate everyone, instructor and participant alike, because I tried to create a program from which perhaps I could have benefited from earlier on in my health journey. I chose this

approach because earlier in my health journey, I only focused on one aspect of health, which was my physical appearance. Though I wanted my physical appearance to change, I was inconsistent with my nutrition and exercise. For years, my trainer attempted to persuade me to pursue counseling to process pain and to discover why I had a habit of sabotaging goals. The push in this direction was towards mental health. She would often express to me, "If you do not get at whatever is going on with you internally, you will not reach your overall health goals, or see the results physically." The Inside Out Health Initiative was created around me and my previous approach to my physical health. Perhaps, I could have avoided the painful event of a heart attack had I been more inclusive in my approach to spiritual and mental health as well.

Implementation

When I speak about a paradigm shift, I specifically reference a rethinking or reimagining a structure or system that was passed down culturally or systematically. For example, the idea of corporal punishment in relation to children evolved over the years. Culturally speaking, though justifiably debated, a shift in the paradigm continues to evolve as more information becomes available and more tools are provided to parents raising children. As it relates to clergy and service, many clergypersons inherit an unspoken or sometimes spoken system or structure of self-sacrifice. Personal health, family, friendships, and an overall enjoyment of life is often forfeited because of service to God and to the church. This structure or system needs reexamination and a shift in the paradigm needs to be brought to bear.

The theme behind my research is a "Paradigm Shift: A Model for Clergy and Congregations to Partner and Adopt Holistic Approaches to Health and Wellness." I was very privileged to operate and implement my research in my context, which is the Advent UCC in Columbus, Ohio. I have the privilege of serving as pastor of the Advent UCC, and the past three years revealed many health concerns within the congregation including strokes, cancers, multiple sclerosis, hypertension, obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and mental health concerns. By implementing the Inside Out Health Initiative, I wanted to explore the idea of clergy and congregations partnering together and committing to healthier behaviors that are inclusive of spiritual, mental, and physical principles. I wanted to see if they came together and united, not just under the banner of Christ but also health, if their overall quality of life will improve.

I was overweight most of my life and for the past fifteen years, my weight and health were on a rollercoaster ride going up and down with many twists along the way. The name of the program derived from my unsuccessful pursuit of weight loss over decades. I constantly fluctuated in my weight and there was a specific reason for my lack of progress. The singular focus was physical, not recognizing or refusing to accept that there are other components to my person that I intentionally neglected. My wife, trainer, and others shared with me that until I do a deeper internal work of why I sabotage my goals, I will never unlock my potential and manifest my goals. After I yielded to the idea of seeking mental health and developing my spiritual person, I began to see tangible results. I began to work from the 'Inside Out,' and my overall quality of life improved greatly. As a result of this experience, I began to see how my story and the place where I serve as pastor have similar stories. As I learned more about the journeys and pain from

the congregation, I wanted to attempt to provide a solution and limit the health concerns present within the membership. I tried to create a program that would be beneficial to me with the hopes that it would be advantageous to the people.

Advent UCC is a diverse community, and me and my team anticipated a variety of ages would participate in the Inside Out Body Transformation Health Initiative. Most of the participants were employed, and a few were retired. The occupations of participants were diverse as well, where many served in the fields of finance, security, chaplaincy, and health care, just to name a few. Each of the program participants were made aware that the program would run for six weeks; however, at the end of the program, an extra week was added. The message was communicated to each participant in a letter and in a collective setting that the overall goal of the Inside Out Health Initiative was not to lose weight, but to explore to what degree the participants would begin the journey of incorporating healthy behaviors to improve their overall quality of life. Throughout the course of the program, a nutritionist, personal trainer, team leader of cardiac rehabilitation, and the pastors sought to equip participants with the necessary tools to make more informed choices.

The program was conducted over a period of seven weeks during the months of August and September 2021 at the Advent UCC. Over the course of the seven weeks, adequate time was provided to come cover the three areas of mental, spiritual and physical health adequately through focus groups and Sunday sermons. In addition to focus groups and Sunday morning sermons, participants engaged in weekly exercise classes with a personal trainer—sometimes multiple days during the week—held at Five Point Fitness Studio. During the initial week of the program, a pre survey was sent

electronically using Survey Monkey to each participant and during the concluding week a post survey was sent electronically to each participant.

When the Inside Out Health Initiative started, there were a total of sixteen participants and all of them were African American. In terms of the age demographics, there was one participant between the age of eighteen and thirty years old, one participant between the age of thirty-one and forty years old, five participants between the age of forty-one and fifty years old, and nine participants above the age of fifty-one years old. Regarding gender demographics, there was a total of eleven females and five males in the program. As it relates to the educational level of the participants, three individuals held a high school diploma, two individuals completed two years of college, one individual completed three years of college, and six individuals graduated from college. We have four individuals who completed graduate school. We also had a healthy mixture between leadership, membership, clergy, and even individuals who were not direct members of the congregation; however, they were connected through personal relationship. We had seven leaders, five members, two clergy persons, and two individuals outside of the church.

For the first two weeks of the program, the specific focus of the program was mental health. The universal church fails to spend adequate attention addressing this complicated matter. I served two congregations within a ten-year time span, and I personally failed to address this subject matter in the past. The primary reason why I failed to tackle this subject matter was ignorance on my part and I failed to invest the time and energy to educate myself. In tackling this research project, as a clergyperson trying to lead the congregation, I felt that it was my responsibility to educate myself and

try to be relevant to the community I am privileged to serve. With more and more advances to technology, information is literally at our fingertips. Ignorance alone over a subject matter should not be an excuse for failing to address direct concerns within the congregation or that which affects the community indirectly.

Since I have access to technology and can judge between adequate and non-adequate information, I began reading and researching areas within scripture that would address mental health and other closely related issues. In addition to personal study, there are resources within the congregation, as well as within the community to help educate me. I partnered with a not-for-profit organization in the city and a referral was made to a counselor to assist me in my endeavors. To cater to mental health, I will highlight one of the sermons within the two weeks we covered this area. On the first Sunday in August of the Inside Out Health Initiative, I preached from Ruth 1:1-21. I opened the sermon by talking about Simone Biles, the American artistic gymnast. Simone Biles perhaps is the one of the most decorated American gymnasts in the history of the sport. Ms. Biles participated in the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro and won individual gold medals in all-around, vault, and floor exercises.

In the 2021 Summer Olympic games in Tokyo, Japan, Simone Biles was scheduled to participate in her events; however, as the world watched to see her win anticipated gold, Simone Biles unexpectedly and, for many across the country, disappointedly declined to perform due to mental health concerns. I applauded her decision, particularly because she was on a global stage. I applauded her decision because if she continued to perform, she risked further injury to herself and consequently she would potentially hurt her team. At that time, I made the shift from Simone Biles to the

congregation. All of us experienced mental injury of some sort and we pressed past the pain and continued to perform. All of us experienced mental fatigue and consequently we risked further injury to ourselves and others. Simone Biles is an example of someone who exercised courage and risked scrutiny from the public for her own overall mental well-being.

Throughout the sermon, I expressed to them that mental health is your ability to remain calm during crises or chaos and to move on from the incident without long-term negative consequences. I continued to express how mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. To begin the conversation about mental health, I chose Naomi, the wife of Elimelech, because grief struck her household. My first point was Tragedy. Her husband died. Naomi is full of grief because of her husband, but it is not just that. We all experience grief from a loved one's death but that does not mean that we will suffer mental health concerns. The element that tipped the scales for Naomi was how she experienced multiple tragedies through the death of her two sons in addition to her husband. The repeated tragedy can cause the imbalance for many.

My second point in the sermon was Resignation. A clear sign that there is something deeper going on was the fact that Naomi wants to resign from life. Naomi is in so much pain that she wants to isolate or separate herself from her family. Due to the intense pain and how her entire life unexpectedly changes, she feels that she no longer has anything to offer. Naomi provides valid reasons as to why Ruth and Orpah should go

off on their own, including that she has no more sons to marry, she herself is too old to remarry, etc. However, if we fail to search deeper, we will miss the iceberg in front of us. Naomi states that life is bitter towards her, and she believes God is the source behind not her joy but her misfortune. By Naomi stating that she believes she had no more to offer, Naomi desires to isolate herself and transition to a life of resignation.

My third and final point in the sermon on mental health was Identity Change. Over an extended period, Naomi no longer identifies with her name from birth and upon her arrival back home, she wants her name to change from Naomi to Mara, which means bitter. Naomi wants to change her name and hence her identity. Due to circumstance, she could no longer identify with her former self. She is bitter, resentful, and cynical. She lost her husband and two sons. She had a hard life and the more she experiences the more it hardens her internal and external exterior. As a result of the tragedy and all that comes along with that, especially as a woman living in that context, Naomi or Mara feels as if the Lord dealt harshly with her. I intended within this last point and overall message to affirm the long-term pain in people's lives and to acknowledge the reality that it is hard bouncing back and returning to a sense of normalcy. For all of us, pain has the potential to change us. It can manifest itself in different ways, such as disengagement from certain activities, a more cynical disposition, less energy around previous passions, etc.

For two consecutive weeks mental health was the focus and afterwards we transitioned to highlighting another aspect of the Inside Out Health Initiative, which was spiritual health. My intent over the following two weeks was to emphasize that when it comes to living a complete healthy lifestyle, health is not limited to physical or even mental, it must include spirit as well. I believe that we are all spiritual beings and if we

are “off” spiritually, it has the potential to affect every other area in our lives. To cater to spiritual health, I will highlight one of the sermons within the two weeks we covered in this area which I gave on the third Sunday in August. I preached from Mark1:32-39.

I opened the sermon by talking about embarrassing moments and I inserted myself into the situation by drawing out my own embarrassment answering a repeated question offered by the attending physician in the hospital when I had the heart attack. The doctor asked “Mr. Jones, when was the last time you saw your doctor? Mr. Jones, who is your doctor?” I failed to have a satisfactory answer to the question that he and others posed during the week. I made the correlation between my lack of quality health and non-connection with a physician or consistent medical care. If this is true as it relates to the natural, so likewise it is true as it relates to our lack of closeness to the spirit of God, who is the ultimate physician.

To be spiritually healthy depends on what degree one is willing to be close to God. There is an important distinction that should be made as it relates to God verses the church. The church is that institution that is commissioned to carry out the mission and vision of Christ in the world, but to be spiritually whole, well, and healthy, that will come when one determines within themselves that they will draw nigh unto God. The first point that I highlighted in the text was that one must be mindful of pouring out all that you have. When it comes to the resources that God gave you, you should absolutely utilize those gifts, but be mindful of the degree that you extend or expend yourself.

Jesus is in the community of Galilee, and word gets out that Jesus has an abundance of resources. Word gets out that Jesus commanded the impure, unclean spirits and they obeyed him. Word gets out that Jesus healed the mother-in-law of Simon. Word

gets out that Jesus could change their situation, and as a result, the whole community comes out to be healed by Jesus in Galilee. Jesus pours out and ministers to as many people as possible. He heals the sick and exercised demons. Jesus pours out everything he has to serve the people to whom he is connected. There is absolutely nothing wrong with pouring and utilizing your resources.

When it comes to being spiritually healthy, I wanted the people to be mindful of pouring out all they had. The need for people to be healed will always be there. The need for people to be delivered, receive money, and be prayed for will always be there. This is particularly important because clergy, for example, pour out constantly through sermons, Bible study, leadership meeting, weddings, funerals, community engagement activities, etc. The clergyperson also is expected to pour into her or his family and that is just as or more important than the church. Congregants also must be mindful of how much they extend themselves as well. While they may not have analogous church expectations as the clergy person, the congregant is expected to maintain home life, children and extra-curricular activities, career, and whatever other in which a congregant may have involvement.

The second point in the sermon was over the simple principle of pursuing the presence of God. Jesus pursues the physician of his soul and recognized that for him to have a spiritual quality of life, Jesus himself had to be close and connected with divinity. The scripture taught us in the passage that Jesus rises early in the morning and prays in place of solitude. The point of the text was that Jesus is intentional about withdrawing from the crowd and even those who were closest to him, to pursue the presence of God. My intention in the text was to draw a line from Jesus to the people and express to them

that if they desire to be spiritually healthy, like Jesus, they will need to withdraw to a solitary place and connect with divinity. To be spiritually healthy, it will only come through a relentless pursuit, and a desire to be close to divinity. I acknowledged how there were individuals who were running on fumes, weak, and drained because of their desire to serve to the point of exhaustion. To remain spiritually healthy, it is inevitable that we must reconnect with our power source. The closer we are to God, as a spiritual community, the healthier we will be.

The final thing that I highlighted for the community was that when it comes to being spiritually healthy, operating in purpose is paramount. After his time in solitude concludes due to his disciples zeroing in on his location, Jesus is very clear on his purpose to preach the good news in other communities. Since he pursues the presence of God and freely operate in his purpose, he continues to preach, drive out demons, heal the sick, and touch lives. Jesus was a spiritually healthy human being, not just because he was the Son of God, but because he practiced the principle of spending time with his good physician.

For four consecutive weeks mental and spiritual health were the focus and when concluding the sermonic aspect of the Inside Out Health Initiative the focus was on physical health. My desire over the remaining two weeks was to emphasize that when it comes to living a complete healthy lifestyle, nutrition and getting your body moving on a consistent is needful. To cater to physical health, on the second Sunday in September I preached from the 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. By way of introduction, I opened speaking about a young woman by the name of Simone Manuel, who is a twenty-five-year-old African American competitive swimmer who specializes in sprint freestyle. At the 2016

Rio Olympics, she won two gold and two silver medals. In winning the 100-meter freestyle, Simone Manuel became the first Black American woman to win an individual Olympic gold in swimming and set an Olympic and American record.

Simone is originally from Sugar Land, Texas and graduated from Fort Bend Austin High School in 2014. The thing that impressed me the most about this young woman was that she broke records and achieved greatness from an early age. She embodies what it means to have a passion for something, setting goals, achieving those benchmarks, sticking with something until the end. The Apostle Paul writes about athletes who are in a race with the goal of obtaining a prize. The first point that I highlighted as it relates to physical health was, that persons must pursue the vision that they set for their lives. Paul's use of running a race spawned suggestions that the famous Isthmian games, sponsored by Corinth, inspired this language and imagery. The Isthmian games were analogous to our Olympics.

Every runner, from lane one to lane eight, before they made it to the track had a vision for winning the prize in the games. Every runner, from whatever age they started, had the hopes, dreams, and aspirations that one day, it would be them crossing the finish line first. Every runner has the vision of what that day will be like and what it would feel like to cross the finish the line victorious. Every runner has the vision, though only one will come in first place, every runner has the vision that they will be the one adorned with the medal or the crown. Due to that vision that they set for their lives, that passion, and that dream, they pursue it with every fiber of their being.

Leading with this passage in mind, I posed the question to the congregation, "what is the vision that you have set for yourself as it pertains to your physical health?" I

wanted to encourage them by providing a reminder that "barring anything beyond your control, you get to determine what your vision is, and you get to determine what you want your health to look like." I shared with them that when I referenced vision, I talked not about their present health status. Vision is inclusive of the here and now, but it is also about the not yet. The focus is not where you are, but on where you're going. Vision is all about foresight. Vision is an investment into your life's purpose and fulfillment.

As it relates to one's physical being, do you see yourself losing weight, not for pure vanity's sake, but for your overall health? Do you see yourself liberated from diabetes? Do you see yourself transitioning off some or all your medications? Do you see yourself stopping smoking? Do you see yourself eating better, exercising more, and readjusting your wardrobe because of the lifestyle changes that you made? The Apostle Paul shares this ultimate prize in the passage.

Not only must we pursue the vision, but according to the Apostle Paul, the second thing I wanted the people to know is that they needed to execute the plan. To draw upon another sports analogy, when it comes to the pursuit of the spiritual prize, the church in Corinth needed to understand that you can have the largest vision in the world, but if you do not have a plan on how to get there, it is all for naught. Paul challenges the church in Corinth that to compete on a high level or any level and if one desires to win, training is involved. To train effectively and efficiently to win the spiritual prize, one must develop a plan and train according to that.

Paul in essence communicates to the church in Corinth that no one enters or even qualifies for the games without first executing a plan. The Apostle Paul expresses to the church that if you want to win the prize of Christ Jesus, it will not happen on desire

alone; it will happen because you executed a plan. I challenged the people of Advent that executing a plan was not just relevant in the Spirit, but its relevance was also present in flesh. At this point in the message, I opened and shared a personal story regarding my own health. I shared with them that I recently had a doctor's appointment at the Ross Heart Hospital, and I got my blood work done. My pharmacologist called to go over my results and she was very happy to see my overall blood work was great. My LDL, which is the bad cholesterol, was lower than before and my HDL, the good cholesterol, was incrementally getting better. My blood pressure was good, my triglycerides were good, and on and on down the list she went. When she got down to my A1C numbers, she noticed that it was elevated just a tad. A1C is connected to diabetes. I have a vision for my health and diabetes is not a part of the equation. Therefore, since I fail to see diabetes as a part of my equation, the question is this: between now and six months from now, what will I do to bring those numbers down when I have my next appointment? What is my plan to execute and position myself for better health?

My final point was to communicate to them that the Apostle Paul challenges the church in Corinth to take power over their circumstances. When Paul mentions that he strikes a blow to his body, he talks not about his body being bad or an enemy of some sort. Again, his perspective is a spiritual one. His first desire is to win the prize in Christ Jesus, and he recognizes that if he fails to discipline himself and bring his body into subjection, it will readily run into sin and all that it has to offer. He models responsible behavior in front of the church in Corinth and sends a clear message that they must do the same. They must take authority over their bodies and bring it into subjection so that they

too can win the prize in Christ Jesus. He took power over his body so that it may be brought into the service of God.

Likewise, I wanted to challenge the people, when it comes to living your best life now and when it comes to living a healthy life, you must take power or authority over your situation. My intention was to empower the people and express to them that they have the power to change their life. This will take hard work, it will require all of them, and it will take discipline. Through nutrition and exercise alone, we all have the power to reverse the course on diabetes. Through nutrition and exercise alone, we all have the power to reverse course with cardiovascular disease. Through nutrition and exercise alone, we all have the power to reverse course with hypertension and obesity.

I chose to preach these messages in this order because I wanted the people to note that when it comes to living a healthy lifestyle, we oftentimes begin with the physical body. There is no right or wrong way to start living healthy. After all, the main thing is to get started on the journey. While starting with the body makes sense, it is beneficial to start with the mental aspect. At minimum, mental health and physical health should be tackled on simultaneously. If we fail to get our minds in alignment with the journey of health, we will sabotage all progress we make physically. Mental health is vital to moving forward to be healthy from Inside Out. This is why I chose to order the program focusing on mental health first and physical health last. As it pertains to spiritual health, focusing in on that which affects your entire person, I inserted this section in the middle because it continues to reiterate the principle of addressing the internal struggles of a human being, which will yield longer and more fruitful results than addressing the physical alone. I in no way advocate that a person irons out and resolves mental and

spiritual concerns prior to starting a physical program, but tackled simultaneously and not neglected entirely.

During the Inside Out Health Initiative, in addition to the sermons, each week we had focus group sessions that covered mental, spiritual, and physical health. I invited a focus group leader by the name of Ra'shawd Davis, who holds a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling and a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Youngstown State University. He is a licensed professional counselor and certified through the state of Ohio. He is one of four counselors with the City of Columbus Employee Assistance program located in the Columbus Public Health Building. Mr. Davis was very excited about the partnership as he felt that the church would benefit tremendously if more education was provided to the membership. Mr. Davis applauded the work of Advent and this project to bring more mental health resources to the community.

Mr. Davis provided a thorough overview of mental health awareness to the program participants. Though we had a few conversations prior to the event, this was the first time we met in person. Mr. Davis was very engaging and presented the subject matter in a way that was nonthreatening and palatable to the program participants. I believe in prayer and God can work things out for our good; however, I also believe in the value of mental health services as equally important. God created both the physique, spirit, and mind, and for me, it is all one. I embody a "both/and" rather than an "either/or" approach. While there may be some who approach mental health concerns from the vantage point of "just pray about," or "Jesus is your wonderful counselor," there is

significant value in pursuing counseling, and it is not an impediment to or an expression of a lack of faith.

So that we could all be on the same page, Mr. Davis established ground rules, such as privacy and confidentiality, being non-judgmental, share if you feel comfortable to do so, and the principle that this is a safe environment. He elaborated on mental wellbeing and described it as how you feel and how well you can cope with day-to-day life. Our mental wellbeing is dynamic, and it can change from moment to moment, day to day, month to month, or year to year.' Since we all have mental health, depending on context, we are on a spectrum between mental wellness or mental health problems. Mental health problems can affect any of us irrespective of age, personality, or background. They include a wide range of experiences and can affect the way people think, feel, or behave. Mental health problems can appear because of experiences in both our personal and professional lives, or they can occur without any substantive reason.

Since we are on this spectrum, according to Mr. Davis, mental health ought not singularly focus on the negative, but mental wellbeing is absolutely a feature we should highlight. Mental wellbeing is inclusive of recognizing the value in being good in yourself and it affirms one's positive attributes and achievements you made. For those who are mentally well, it is to express and feel the whole range of human emotion without being stuck at any one point.

Mr. Davis also outlined several mental health concerns that plague communities in both advantaged and disadvantaged areas. These concerns include anxiety, depression, eating problems, schizophrenia, phobias, obsessive compulsive disorder, PTSD, and a host of other concerns. As a result of wrestling with some of these concerns,

unfortunately for some, suicide can be an option out of the misery. Mr. Davis spent some time breaking down suicide and the complicated nature behind suicidal ideation. He explained how suicidal ideations can range from one's preoccupation of thoughts pertaining to ending life, the preoccupation of believing that family and friends would be better if you were no longer living, a preoccupation with how to carry out the behavior, and finally, setting definite plans in place to act out how one felt.

It would be an inappropriate assumption to embody the mentality that if a congregant wrestles with mental health concerns, as listed above, that suicide would not be a viable option. Suicide ideation is present in our churches just as it is present in the community, and Mr. Davis challenged the program participants that if we feel that this is a concern of someone to whom we are connected, we can approach them. Mr. Davis dispelled a myth where some believe that asking about their intention will make it happen. He employs the tactic of approaching the individual in a nonjudgmental way, to give them the space to dialogue about how they feel and ask how we can be a support. He wanted us, as program participants, to know that if that if we are connected to someone with mental health concerns and it leads to an awareness of their suicidal ideation, it is ok to ask questions, such as: "Are you thinking about ending your life?" or "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"

After the two weeks of mental health, we transitioned to the theme of spiritual health. Co-pastor of the Advent UCC in Columbus, OH, Rev. Dr. Imani Jones was the invited focus group leader. She received her bachelor's degree in Political Science and African and African American Studies from Ohio State University. Rev. Jones received her Master of Divinity and Master of Theology degree from Princeton Theological

Seminary in Princeton, NJ and her Doctor of Ministry degree from Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit, MI. Dr. Jones has a published chapter in the Journal of Reflective Practice. Dr. Jones was more than excited to share with the program participants in a more intimate setting as she had the opportunity to have dialogue and engage the spiritual health theme. When it comes to spirituality, it is important to talk about how one connects with divinity and highlight features of prayer, worship, service; however, equally as important, are the aspects that affect the entire person.

Dr. Jones shared a presentation that is common to all human existence and that is spiritual distress. What does it mean to be in spiritual distress? Dr. Jones opened by talking about crisis and how crisis is any unexpected, stressful, or confusing situation. Crisis is found in everyday situations, whether in family, career, financial loss, decline in health, national tragedy, etc. Crisis is common fare to people inside and outside of the church. She shared with the program participants that crisis can be likened to how we inwardly process and respond to external stimuli. Just because a tragic event happens outside of us does not necessarily equate to it being a crisis. How we internally process that external event and respond to it determines the degree of crisis in our life.

When inwardly and external situations mount, and we interpret these events as a crisis, monumental questions of meaning can arise. Why is this happening to me? What is my purpose? What is the meaning of my suffering? What does it mean to be in spiritual distress? According to Dr. Jones, spiritual distress is when an individual has a disruption in their core belief system. This disruption can take the form of death, anxiety, an unexpected life change, or a loss in dignity just to name a few. It may prove even more problematic when an individual experiences this disruption during an attempt to find

fulfillment, meaning, and strength in other areas of life. Spiritual distress has the potential to paralyze your entire person and place a hold on future dreams and aspirations.

When someone experiences spiritual distress, they have the potential to experience a whole range of human emotions including anger or hopelessness, depression and anxiety, abandonment by God, or raising questions about the validity of faith. When it comes to spiritual distress, the precipitating event can be both expected and unexpected. For example, I had the privilege of serving in hospice as chaplain for six years. Over the course of those six years, I had the privilege of walking alongside and providing spiritual and emotional support to countless families from Columbus, Ohio to Cleveland, Ohio. One of the consistent themes that I would share with families who experienced a degree of crisis or spiritual distress once their loved one passed away, would be the anticipation of death does not take away the pain of the moment. One will still go through the whole range of human emotion and depending upon the level of connection to the now deceased individual, the event itself could temporarily alter the trajectory of that person's life.

A precipitating event or crisis could not only affect the direct family, but an entire congregation as well. If someone of note in the congregation experienced a traumatic injury or received a new diagnosis, an overwhelming sense of grief could flood the congregation and prevent some from moving forward. If there was a tragedy that took place at a school, to provide support to the students, counselors provide support to limit the amount of distress that could be on the horizon. Preventing or eliminating crises from happening is not possible; however, if one has appropriate or adequate tools to process the pain, a better outcome is possible. According to Dr. Jones, there are a variety of ways

one can receive support while going through spiritual distress. Some external resources to provide support may include family, friends, a church community, or even medical care. Internal resources of support may include more knowledge, problem-solving and critical thinking skills as well.

After the two weeks of spiritual health, we transitioned to the theme of physical health and physical health was split over three weeks. We covered nutrition and physical fitness. Coach Cailah Brock-Benson was the invited focus group leader. Coach Cailah received her bachelor's degree in exercise science and fitness management at the University of Dayton and her master's degree in coaching education focusing in on exercise physiology at Ohio University. Coach Cailah is the chief executive officer (CEO) and founder at Design Your Body Academy. With nearly sixteen years of experience in fitness and business, Coach Cailah helped hundreds of clients lose thousands of pounds and has assisted in eliminating the need for dozens of medications. She is also a certified strength and conditioning specialist (CSCS), health coach (HC) and personal trainer (CPT). Coach Cailah is also the author of *Design Your Body: Your Guide to Cutting Through the Fat*.

The program participants were uniquely privileged to receive instruction from her over two consecutive weeks, as she spoke about both nutrition and physical fitness. In my initial meeting with Coach Cailah, I expressed to her that my intent in having a dialogue about nutrition was not to provide an actual meal plan to the program participants. Many individuals who begin health programs are immediately provided a meal plan. Meal plans are wonderful and are a great resource. However, over the long haul, I question the effectiveness of learning with a meal plan alone. The approach that I sought to undertake

in this program was to educate and equip the program participants with the tools necessary to make more informed choices. If the program participants were equipped with the knowledge of nutrition, it would empower them with the ability to make sound choices at home, in grocery stores, and at restaurants. Having the knowledge base fails to equate with a complete lifestyle change, but it is a start down the road to improved health.

In the presentation, Coach Cailah couched her conversation under the subject heading of "Trinity of Health & Wellness." When it comes to a total lifestyle of physical health, for Coach Cailah three elements are important including proper nutrition, resistance training, and cardiovascular endurance. Nutrition in its proper context is central to everything that we do and affects every area of our lives. Nutrition affects our metabolism, which is the process of using food for energy. Nutrition affects our immune system, which is your body's defense mechanism against all disease. Nutrition affects our stress and relaxation and our hormone balancing, which promotes homeostasis. Nutrition also affects proper body weight and composition, and brain health, which connects to speed, memory, efficiency, and clarity.

She provided an overview of macronutrients, such as fats, carbohydrates, proteins, and provided a definition of micronutrients, such as vitamins, and minerals. Vitamins are for energy production, immune function, blood clotting and other vital functions. Minerals play an important role in growth, bone health, fluid balance, and several other processes. All these items are building blocks upon one another. Coach Cailah challenged the program participants to invest in a journey of acquiring knowledge in the world of fruits and vegetables; to expand one's palate and to see that there are many fruits and vegetables with an assortment of colors that we have yet to consume. She challenged the

program participants to explore the health benefits of what is cooked and what is consumed fresh.

Not only did she challenge the program participants to have a better understanding of macronutrients and micronutrients, but she also touched about herbs and spices. This is particularly relevant for me because in my attempt to make lifestyle adjustments towards a better cardiovascular healthy lifestyle, oftentimes it is not what someone eats but how the food is prepared. Leaning about herbs and spices is tremendously beneficial and provides a worthy substitute than seasoned salt for example. I am currently on a two thousand milligram sodium restriction diet, and one teaspoon of salt is twenty-three hundred milligrams of sodium. With just one teaspoon of salt, I am already over my allotment for the day. Learning about herbs and spices is beneficial and it creates options for me to season my food so that my overall health and wellbeing can improve.

Peppered throughout the presentation, Coach Cailah also bridged the gap between physical health and spirituality by using scripture references, such as 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Proverbs 31:17, 25, and 1 Corinthians 10:31. She connected our desire for health and presented information that was consistent with what scripture promotes as well. The program participants appreciated the connection and were more motivated because they stood upon a firm foundation, which is the word of the Lord. Not only would they simply talk about how God desires for them to be healthy, but they would be able to list certain scriptures that promote health, exercise, and nutrition.

I mentioned earlier that the program was originally slated to be six weeks. I decided, with the permission of the program participants, to add a bonus week

reemphasizing the subject of nutrition. We had one final focus group leader come share about nutrition; however, she approached the subject differently. While Coach Cailah approached the subject from the perspective of promoting nutrition to become healthier, this focus group leader approached the subject from the perspective of consequences to our health if we fail to clean up our nutrition or are inconsistent with exercise. Focus group leader Lauren Schmitt, was a part of the cardiovascular rehab team whose practice I attended for several months immediately following my heart attack. I am tremendously grateful to her for her wisdom, and she was excited to partner with the me in improving the quality of life for the program participants.

Lauren Schmitt is a graduate of Ohio University where she received a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Physiology. She participated in a cardiopulmonary internship at Duke University and holds a Clinical Exercise Physiologist Certification through the American College of Sports Medicine. Currently, Lauren Schmitt is the Wellness and Prevention team leader and is the lead exercise physiologist responsible for overseeing an outpatient cardiac rehabilitation and VO2max stress lab at Ohio State Medical Center Outpatient Care East. Her duties also include nutritional counseling, running VO2max testing, creating customized exercise prescriptions for patients, and developing new objectives and policies for the stress lab.

Her presentation centered around how food affects our health. According to Ms. Schmitt, the leading causes of death are heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes. She shared with us from the beginning that our nutrition, or the lack thereof, is a major contributor to the aforementioned leading causes of death. Ms. Schmitt shared with us that eating foods high in saturated fat increases your risk of heart disease. In helping us

determine or identify saturated fat, she explained that fats that are solid at room temperature (i.e., butter, cheese, beef (fatty), lamb, pork, poultry skin, lard, cream, whole and 2% milk). This kind of fat circulates through the blood and deposits on your artery walls making it harder and harder for blood to flow through. When it comes lowering risk for heart disease, she suggested to the group to eat foods lower in fat content and increase our fiber intake. Foods high in fiber include oats, beans, lentils, broccoli, brussels sprouts, berries, apples, pears, sweet potato, and flax seed.

She not only broke down further the consequences for poor nutrition such as heart disease, but she also spent time breaking down poor nutrition and the connection to cancer and diabetes. Lauren provided solutions that would cover each of these areas that if applied on a consistent basis would lower our risk and potentially remove our names from having issues in the above list. Solutions would include exercise and consuming a plethora of fruit and vegetables (complex carbs), lean cuts of meats, baked, air fried, roasted, or grilled food, and remembering to use small amounts of oil or butter, but never margarine. She challenged us as a community to pay close attention to serving sizes on food labels and if eating at a restaurant to cut the meal in half and take home a doggy bag. Ms. Schmitt advocated for cooking at home as much as possible.

Eating clean affects our bodies in very positive way. Fruits and vegetables help keep a healthy microbiome in the gut. Fried food and fatty foods destroy the good microbiome and replace it with the bad bacteria, which in turn makes one crave more bad food (i.e., chocolate/soda addiction). She suggested that chronic bad microbiome causes inflammation in the body that will increase your risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Fruits and vegetables provide more energy where one will

likely be more active, while poor diet causes tiredness and a lack of desire to be more active. The connection between poor nutrition and its consequences took on a new light among the program participants.

Another significant part of the program was to include an actual physical fitness component in which the program participants would engage. Since 2002, Angela Nixon worked as a professional physical trainer and owner of Five Point Fitness, and she oversaw the exercise portion of the Inside Out Health Initiative. With any health initiative worth its substance, a physical exercise regimen will be introduced into the program where participants can be involved. As a collective body, the group will engage in an exercise class offered three times per week. This exercise class was held at Five Point Fitness studio instead of the options that were originally discussed including Advent UCC and the platform of Zoom. The ethos and overall success of the group exercise concept was based on the idea surrounding community. As a collective body, the group participated in exercise sessions that served as a source of encouragement to each other.

Each class was held on Monday and Thursday evenings from 5:45 p.m. – 6:15 p.m. and Saturday mornings from 9:45 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Each participant had to preregister for class each time they wanted to participate because there was only a limited number of slots available. The program participants would not only exercise together, but they would also be in class with other individuals who improved their physical health as well. The beginning of the program shared that the physical fitness component of the program was strongly encouraged and three days per week would be optimal; however, at least one class per week would be satisfactory.

Ms. Nixon facilitated the group fitness class in a way that was engaging each day for the seven weeks throughout the program. Ms. Nixon taught the value of moving the body. No matter how old an individual, consistent physical exercise will contribute to overall health and has the potential to increase not just the quality of someone's life, but the quantity as well. Ms. Nixon was also very intentional in pointing out that if one could not perform any exercise due to previous injury or difficulty, adjustment and manipulation is possible. She presented herself in a way that was nonthreatening and inviting to anyone, and everyone who wanted to participate would be more than welcome.

Summary of Learning

The hypothesis that undergirds the Inside Out Health Initiative is as follows: If project participants at the Advent UCC take part in an educational symposium on holistic health, then they will be equipped to engage in self-care that will add to their quality of life. My hypothesis seeks to solve the problem of members and clergy at the Advent UCC having insufficient or inadequate tools to engage in self-care that will contribute to their quality of life. The overall purpose of each aspect of the program—mental, physical, and spiritual—was to equip the program participants with the tools necessary to make more informed choices for the purposes of a better quality of life.

Each program participant completed a pre- and post-survey with no variance in the questions besides the very last question on the post-survey. The question that the post-survey posed was, "As a result of participating in the Inside Out Health Initiative, did this program improve your overall quality of life?" More information surrounding the

question will be explained later. I very much appreciated the program participants because everyone completed the survey within the time frame allotted, which was a week.

The first question that I posed in the pre and post survey asked the respondent to explain the person's current understanding of self-care. The purpose of this question was to ascertain what kind of exposure they had to this concept. Even the terminology of self-care is not necessarily a part of church language. The intent behind the Inside Out Health Initiative was for the program participants to develop a different or more expanded definition of self-care. One hundred percent of the sixteen participants previously were exposed to the terminology of self-care according to the pre-survey. The answers ranged from taking time to assess your mind, body, and soul; taking the time to nourish yourself physically, mentally, and spiritually; and having personal time to manage all aspects of self. One participant who is identified as O7343 said, "Self-care is listening to your mind, body and spirit. It is to understand what it needs and honoring that. It can be nurturing your body with what you eat and drink, taking preventative measures like going to the doctor, resting, taking part in leisure activities that bring joy."

The post survey posed the same question and there was evidence of growth. The answers ranged from taking the intentional time to do something for yourself and not putting other people or things before self; being intentional about reflection and regrouping; and self-care is a combination of things to help calm the inner person, which can include reading, exercise, mediation, therapy, etc. I wanted the people to see that "self" is valuable and there is a plethora of ways to add to one's person so that enjoyment of life is not only possible but practical. In fact, as it pertains to self-care, it is an absolute

necessity to improving the quality of your life. In the post survey, the person identified as O7343 said, “Self-care is nurturing the entire being and tending to what one needs. One must recognize what you need and honor that. Understanding that life can be overwhelming and doing things to counteract that is important.”

In another example of personal growth as a result of participating in the program, in the pre-survey participant S7638 said, “Self-care is anything you do to take care of yourself, such as: haircare, manicures, pedicures, and exercise.” In the post survey, S7638 said, “Self-care is taking notice and care of your body, what foods you put in your body, how much rest you get nightly, how you are feeling mentally (are you depressed or finding it hard to sleep?), and spiritually. My connection with God is so important to me.” The hope is that as more people become self-aware of the need to take better care of themselves, they will pursue intentional ways to do small things that will improve their overall quality of life.

The second question that the pre- and post-survey posed to the participants was “has anyone expressed the need for you to engage in self-care?” I asked this question because if program participants previously encountered the term self-care, one wonders how they came across this information or if someone significant in their lives brought this benefit to their world. Seventy-five percent of the respondents replied yes, while twenty-five percent replied no. The overwhelming consensus reported that for those who had previous exposure to the terminology or concept of self-care, the vehicle of exposure was family, friends, and then clergy. Multiple respondents shared how an uncle or family members encouraged them to slow down and take care of themselves. Some individuals lost a spouse, and one individual lost his son and experienced a divorce along the way.

During great tragedy, as some have reported, the need and awareness of self-care was even more apparent.

In the pre survey, several individuals wrote about how they were unable to take time out of their schedules due to making sure the family's needs were met. Program participant Z9668 said, "When I was raising my child, working a full-time job, a part-time job and going to school three nights a week, it became challenging to implement the advice of others." Program participants in the pre survey consistently wrote how they had individuals constantly checking in on them to make sure they would take care of themselves.

In the post survey, the respondents were more concerned with finding creative ways to implement strategies for self-care into their lives and were more appreciative of others who pushed them to do so. Program participant O2346 said, "Family and friends have expressed that it's important to take a moment of self-care each day. This helps to reduce stress and become aligned in your goals." In the post survey, more and more program participants articulated that others told them to implement change and take advantage of opportunities even amid difficulties. Program participant S8903 said, "My Dr. has always tried to give me suggestions as to what I need to do to make me better." Program participant C6563 said, "I've been told that it's very important that I practice and take advantage of self-care opportunities."

From this question alone, drawing from both the pre and post surveys, I can ascertain the absolute value that having family and friends as a part of your inner circle is paramount to your health and well-being. Being closely connected to people that care and genuinely love you will improve your overall quality of life. To be closely connected to

people who have your best interests in mind will go a long way towards health and wellness. I want to call attention to three things. The first lesson to learn is the role that family and friends play in identifying the need for self-care. Family and friends can possibly see our blind spots and share vital information about taking better care of ourselves.

The second lesson to learn is the program participants also identified the role that clergy play in identifying the need for self-care. Clergy have a powerful voice and can influence the congregation to live a better quality of life as it relates to health and well-being. The program participants identified clergy, and this is important because many clergypersons may see their role as limited to the spiritual experience of their congregation. Some clergy may view their role as limited to ensuring that the congregation has a connection with divinity. While this is absolutely the case, clergy can also influence the congregation to improve their health through suggestion and by modeling responsible behavior in front of them.

The third lesson that the program participants taught me through their responses to the question was in what they failed to say. Not one program participant listed work or one's job as a source for self-care. While there may be individuals on the job that have a deeper connection than others, the job itself will not invest that kind of encouragement in you. One's job or career is not the place to find tools of self-care or managing stress in the personal arena. Work has one objective and specifically focuses on how well one can be productive. The program participants articulated that the place for encouragement and revitalization comes from those to whom you are connected. That power source comes from family, friends, and the clergy.

The third question that the pre- and post-survey posed centered around the current understanding of nutrition. I asked this question because nutrition is oftentimes a system that we inherited from our family of origin and culture. How we nourish our bodies as adults emerges from how we were nourished as children. I wanted to catch a glimpse of their current understanding of nutrition and if it they made choices that are consistent with their understanding. In the pre survey, the responses were mixed in terms of how they approached the questions. Some respondents provided a general overview of nutrition, such as program participant O7343 who said, "Nutrition is everything that we put into our bodies – food, drink, medicines, supplements, etc. Everything can either contribute to our health in a positive or negative way (or sometimes both)." Program participant V9797 said, "Nutrition is getting the proper foods and hydration that will fuel your body and mind." Program participant L1265 said, "I understand that nutrition is knowing that your plate should be more fruits and vegetables."

The responses above expressed more of a general overview of their understanding of nutrition. Several of the other responses had more to do with an acknowledgment that personal responsibility and ownership needs increasing. The question itself made several respondents reflect over their own personal choices and how adjustments are crucial to moving forward. Several respondents spoke about the need to eat right and noted their own health concerns as a reason to change behavior regarding their nutrition. Respondent E2873 reported that "I need to be more conscious about my diet. I am a diabetic and I need to count carbs." Respondent C6345 said, "I understand that I should eat a healthy diet that promotes low blood pressure, sugar, and weight loss." A respondent, O2346, noted an understanding of what nutrition is, but follow-through was not as present. That

responded wrote “I understand nutrition but don’t follow good nutritional habits all the time.”

In the post survey, when asked the same question about their current understanding about nutrition, one hundred percent of their answers specifically focused on consuming good quality food on a consistent basis; it had less to do with their personal behavior in the past and what nutrition meant moving forward. Respondent L1265 said, “Eating healthy food, reading labels, and drinking lots of water is what is needed from here on out.” Responded A1616 said, “Nutrition is when you are eating the right food and right portion every day.” Throughout the line of responses, there was consistent themes throughout, which was an indication that learning occurred. Respondent S7638 said, “Eating healthy well-balanced meals and drinking lots of water is necessary.” Respondent P8234 was an individual that not only responded to the survey, but personally expressed to me the deep and profound appreciation for the research project overall and the nutritional information as well. Respondent P8234 is sixty-nine years old and felt that she was equipped with a strategy for success, noting that “I must eat the correct amount of healthy clean foods to maintain a healthy body. I know what I have do and I have a plan to implement to implement that plan.”

The next question on the surveys focused on physical fitness, and asked “Have you spent consistent time in any exercise program? If so, what was purpose? If not, please explain what has prevented you from doing so.” I posed the question because I wanted to get an idea of how active the program participants were in the past or present. Seventy-five percent of the respondents responded affirmatively that they spent consistent time in an exercise program either currently or in the past. Twenty-five percent

of the respondents responded that they failed to spend consistent time in an exercise program. In the pre survey, almost all the respondents noted that the time in their life where they participated in a consistent exercise program was when there was a specific goal attached at the end. The specific goal itself was the motivating factor for consistent exercise. This understanding, according to the respondents, taught me the value in identifying the goals of the congregant as it relates to health and wellness. By clarifying the goal and setting realistic plans, this formula is paramount to developing consistency. Where there is no vision for your health, there will be no pursuit or consistency towards that end. As a result of no vision and no consistency, one should not be surprised when experiencing chronic illness.

Respondent T2222 expressed the specific times of consistency and the specific purpose or goal pursued, writing that "2003, 2004, and 2007 I trained for a half-marathon in Cincinnati, OH." The primary goal repeated throughout the pre survey was weight loss. For those respondents who had the goal of weight loss, consistent exercise was incorporated in the lifestyle at least two to three times per week. For those respondents who were more high achieving, five to seven days a week seemed to be the more optimal approach to being healthy. As a researcher, this was important for me because according to their responses, I could reasonably conclude that most of the people who volunteered for the research program previously connected with other programs in the past.

In the post survey, the consistent exercise program consisted of program participants training at Five Point Fitness. The program went for seven weeks; however, program participants had the option to continue exercising together in the group class. Approximately fifty percent of the participants continued to engage in the physical fitness

portion. Each of the participants noted that this program was the most consistent that they were in a very long time. Several of the participants expressed weight loss goals as a reason for continuing and others noted how they experienced much needed results. Program participant S9022 said, “My exercise experience over the last two months has helped my mobility and my overall strength. It also has helped me to have something to look forward to and challenge myself to do more with each workout.” A member of the program expressed the benefit of participating in the program. While her personal health benefited indirectly, her purpose centered around providing support to family. Program participant S7638 said, “I have enjoyed this class and it has aided me significantly in providing home care for my mother.”

The next question that I posed centered around the spiritual connection between self-care and sabbath rest. I wanted to assess if program participants think in an isolated, compartmental way or if they are more inclusive in their thought. One hundred percent of the respondents agreed that there is a spiritual connection between self-care and sabbath rest. In the pre survey, the respondents acknowledged that not only is there a connection between the two, but also the necessity of incorporating the principles of self-care and sabbath. The acknowledgement in some of the participants that the business of their lives makes self-care and sabbath rest more difficult. Program participant U1313 said, “I don’t know how to access or make time for a true sabbath rest.” This individual carries a lot of responsibility on their shoulders as they must be mindful of providing for family inside the household and outside the household. How does one fit moments of pause on a consistent basis in one’s lifestyle?

Taking intentional time to rest is difficult to do, and several participants acknowledged this reality in the pre survey. Several other participants shared the sentiment of connecting rest and self-care with Jesus and following his example. Program participant B1402 said, “Jesus rested on the seventh day, and he was our example. He also states that we are his temple; therefore, we should take the time to take care of our bodies which are the temple of God.” Another participant, C6345, shared how being spiritually connected was a springboard into better self-care practices. This responded stated that “I believe I feel more motivated to indulge in self-care when I am feeling more spiritually connected.” Another participant plainly acknowledged how the body must take time to rest to be a healthy individual. Program participant S7638 said, “The body must have rest as a way of maintain our health. Ideally on the sabbath we should rest and worship God.”

In the post survey, one hundred percent of the respondents drew a much stronger connection between self-care and a sabbaths rest. In fact, many of the respondents articulated that they felt that the terminology was one in the same. One respondent embraced the idea of self-care so much that self-love increased so much more. Program participant S8903 stated, “I have found that self-care has given me more love of myself. By loving myself I can establish a closer connection with everyone.” Program participant S9022 acknowledged this interconnectedness between the two principles and how spirituality is infused within both. According to this participant, “I know that it is all connected. Spiritual, Emotional and Physical self-care is important. Good rest is also very important. Everything needs to take a break.” To reiterate the theme of interconnectedness, program participant P8234 shared, “To me they are one in the same.

My self-care is the slow down and do something for myself and sabbath rest also means to slow down and take things one day at a time."

In the post survey, what is interesting to note is that two individuals made the connection that a lack of self-care can result in a lack of service to God. Program participant O7343 stated, "Our bodies are given to us from God and should be honored by how we care for it, including with rest." Program participant L1265 pushed the envelope a little further, reporting that "If you are not resting and taking care of yourself, how can you serve God." This program participant was a member of the church for a long time and serves within the ministry. In further dialogue with the participant, a question was posed to explore if there is a connection between service in the church and lack of self-care. As a clergyperson, I believe this is key. As a clergyperson, if I am unable to adequately care for myself and contribute to the quality of my own life, my ability to serve Christ and the church would significantly decrease. The more I invest in self and meet my own needs, then potentially I will free up space within me, which will enable me to provide service to God and the church.

The next question centered on priorities, and I wanted them to label the top three priorities in their life, and I wanted to know if self-care was in the top tier. I wanted to know where they place living a healthy lifestyle on their priority chart. My assumption is that many will place family or employment as priorities; however, is health or self-care included in their list? In the pre-survey, the program participants listed as their top three priorities: family, spirituality, and self-care. There is significant value in those to whom we are connected, and family was the choice for most of the respondents. Spirituality and self-care were almost even with each other. Since my context was in a church setting and

the church I am privileged to pastor, it was not a surprise to me to have spirituality listed as a top three priority. If this same question were raised in another context, the answers would look different. I was very pleased the respondents noted in the pre survey that self-care was a priority. Knowing this information heading into the program is helpful and will be easier to share because the community is open to incorporating strategies into their livelihood.

The respondents were given an opportunity to elaborate on their answers. Each of them articulated why out of all their responsibilities, family, spirituality, and self-care rang truest among them. All answers were substantive. Some answers were elaborate, and some were straightforward and to the point. Program participant P0923 said, "With family I am happy and if I am not healthy, I will miss out on them." This participant throughout the program expressed how much his family means to him and the value he placed on health. P0923 recognizes the value of health, and he is an example of someone who will move heaven and earth for his family. Program participant O7343 is another example of someone who shared the value of family and self-care in the response, writing

> I believe this life is about using our gifts to enhance the experience for others, and in turn, that same nurture and care is given back to us. I know that I can't be of service to anyone else if I don't care for myself. I also believe that if we are blessed to have children, we are responsible for providing for them in a way that best prepares them to do good in the world. These are my most important responsibilities.

In the post survey, respondents for the most part kept their answers the same; however, another theme emerged and that was nutrition. Throughout the focus group sessions on physical health, when nutrition was the topic at hand, there was a lot of energy surrounding the subject matter. Almost all the program participants admitted that food was a major source of struggle and to bring oneself to eat in a disciplined manner would

be a profound struggle. Although nutrition would be difficult, collectively, the program participants were open to taking up the challenge. Seeing several individuals mention nutrition as a top three priority was refreshing. According to program participant S7638, "I want to live disease free for the rest of my life. This will include a change in my lifestyle as it relates to my nutrition."

The next question on the pre and post survey connected to their current understanding of spiritual health. I asked this question because I wanted the program participants to reflect upon where they are as it relates to their connection with God. I wanted to know if they would view their relationship with God through the lens of health. Would the program participants view their relationship with God as something healthy or needing improvement? The responses were very broad and hit each end of the spectrum. According to program participant O2346, "I am still working on spiritual health." This participant failed to grow up in the church and membership in Advent UCC is new. The program participant acknowledged the role that God played and seeks for more truth and connection.

Spiritual connection is very important to this community, and many expressed that their spiritual connection is practiced through corporate worship each week, Bible study, listening to gospel music on the radio or through other streaming platforms, as well as consistent prayer and acts of service. An example of a response that more than captures each participants view comes from program participant O7343, who writes "I practice my spiritual health by praying daily (multiple times in multiple ways), meditating, going to church, and doing good in the world. Listening for God's voice and

for signs that I am on the right path. Practicing what I believe God wants me to do and be. I have an opportunity to read and study the Bible more."

In the post survey, there was evidence of growth and an expanded view of what spiritual health can look like. In addition to the traditional spiritual practices, I also wanted to share that spiritual connection involved their entire person. Spirituality was not limited to connection to divinity but caring for their entire person and making sure that was intact and secure. If they feel depressed, disconnected, or disjointed, all these feelings effect the spirit. If they feel moments of pure joy and pleasantness, these are also feelings that effect their spirit. If someone is depressed, they may or may not attempt to connect with divinity. I wanted to promote a sense that spirituality is all inclusive.

According to program participant L1265, "Spiritual health is when your spirit, mind, and body are working together." Another program participant, S7638, highlighted a similar understanding, and stated that "Having a balance lifestyle mentally, physically, and feeling more connected to God is what spiritual health means to me." When program participants were given permission to push the boundaries on their understanding of spirituality, many leaned into that notion. Program participant J7238 stated, "Spiritual health includes a purposeful life, transcendence and actualization of different dimensions and capacities of human beings." Program participant S8903 added that "I feel that I have a healthy relationship with my God and understand that he wants nothing less than the best for me. That includes every aspect of me." "Every aspect of me," captures the heart of each participant's broadened understanding of spirituality. Each program participant openly expressed excitement about living a healthier spiritual life.

Another question on the survey asked if living a healthy lifestyle fit within their current way of living. One of the pushbacks for individuals living healthier lifestyles is time. If health is a value, in what way will the program participants build holistic living into their lifestyle even with limited time? On the pre survey, ninety-four percent of the respondents indicated that a healthy lifestyle fits within their current way of living. Six percent of the respondents replied that living a healthy lifestyle fails to fit in this season of life.

Each of the program participants shared enthusiasm for wanting more out of life and the key to living as free as they desire is to be as healthy as possible. The participants all actively attempt to incorporate healthier strategies into their lives, and many did this prior to joining this program. Another group of participants jumped at the opportunity provided to get them started or reengaged with their health. Simply put, program participant L1265 kept this part of her survey short and noted that "I want to live a healthier life."

Program participant E2873 failed to participate in the group portion of the exercise class at Five Point Fitness due to transportation in getting to the facility. Before the beginning of the program, the individual thought this would disqualify the individual from participating in the program. I assured this person that this was not the case, and I desired not to place the participant in position of discomfort by requesting another member of the group to provide transportation. This individual assured me that a Young Men's Christian Association or YMCA was close to the neighborhood and the individual already participated in group swim classes. This person added, "Since I am retired, and the pandemic is almost over consistency is very much a possibility."

The program participants acknowledged at times the difficulty of balancing life responsibilities and inserting their health into the equation. They saw it as a reality and needful. Program participant P0923 stated, “I need to make changes, but it is something that I want to do. I am putting my best foot forward.” Another program participant, O7343, wrote that “I am grateful to have all of the tools and resources I need to live a healthy lifestyle. I think that is half of the battle. I can make time to do better, and I am working on that. I have support to help with things like childcare for me to prioritize my health.” Program participant B5555 shared why it is necessary to operate with consistency even during business, noting that “As I get older certain foods affect me differently than they did when I was younger. Getting proper amount of sleep makes my mind and body function properly. Paying attention to your body was something I had to learn.” Across the board, even those who felt that they lacked the time to insert healthier behaviors into their lifestyle, everyone expressed the desire to make change for their overall quality of life.

In the post survey, the numbers changed. As a result of going through the program, one hundred percent of the program participants now shared that a healthy lifestyle fits within their current way of living. I was pleased with the change because an attempt was made to show how with slight adjustments each day, incremental steps towards a healthier life would prove extremely beneficial. When it came to the reasoning for why participants felt they had the time even amid a busy lifestyle, family was a motivating factor. According to program participant C4545, “I want to be around for my kids and grandkids.” According to program participant C6563, “I need to be healthy so that I am able to enjoy my children.” Based on the consensus of the group as they

identified family as a top three priority in their life, this response from several respondents makes sense.

As one solidifies one's personal values and then makes decisions consistent with those values, anything can change for the better. One program participant spoke to the urgency of now in incorporating such change. Program participant P8234, stated that "It must fit in. We only have one body, and we must take care of it, or we will pay the price of a shorter life span." This individual's statement and that of others captures the crux of why this program was created. If the congregation buys into and commits to living a healthy lifestyle, not only will their lives change, but it will be a domino effect with the family and eventually the collective community as well. Not only will an individual's quality of life be improved, but potentially the quantity as well. This literally is a matter of life and death.

The final question posed to the program participants was directly related to my hypothesis. My hypothesis was that if project participants at the Advent United Church of Christ take part in an educational symposium on holistic health, then they will be equipped to engage in self-care that will add to their quality of life. The question that was posed was, "As a result of participating in the Inside Out Health Initiative, did this program improve your overall quality of life?" Sixty-seven percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. Twenty-five percent of the respondents agreed. Eight percent of the respondents responded neither agree nor disagree. No participant responded with disagree or strongly disagree. Therefore, the answer to the question is yes; by participating in the educational symposium, my hypothesis was proven in the affirmative.

Each of the program participants responded with substantive answers and many explicitly stated that they wanted to continue even though this portion concluded. Each of the participants shared how much they grew and what it did to assist them in this journey. I will highlight several responses as a way to capture the entirety of the program. Program participant S9022 stated, “I see things differently. A lot of things that I have heard for much of my life, I now hear, truly hear, and try to understand. My eyes are now open. I pay much more attention to everything I do.” Program participant H2222 added, “I make better decision and plan for long-term improvement. Changed a lifestyle, thank you.” Program participant S9022, mentioned that “It helped me strengthen my relationship with myself/body and mind, my mother and church family.” Finally, program participant P8234, stated that “The classes and professionals conducting the classes gave me a better understanding of what it takes to really take care of your mind, body and soul. Also, I was equipped with the ways to access the materials I need to achieve my goals.”

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Inside Out Health Initiative was a very fruitful program and one that I learned very much about myself and the community that I am privileged to serve. As stated earlier, my highest intention was to create a program from which I would have benefited on this journey of health and wellness. This program is just the crux of what is possible and so much more stands to be explored and discerned. Mental, physical, and spiritual health are all connected and to pursue change that will last a lifetime, each element of ourselves deserves to be treated with the utmost respect and dignity.

Overall, I believe the program flowed very well from beginning to end. I want to express my sincere gratitude to the contextual associates, who planned for a significant amount of time prior to the start of the program. Each of the five associates sacrificed their time, energy, and lent their minds to assist me in creating a program that would benefit the members of the Advent UCC. I also want to express my gratitude for the professional associates who were kept informed of the progress of the research program each step of the way and they contributed and provided constructive feedback.

Each of the focus group leaders brought their energy, enthusiasm, and expertise to the moment and the people benefited greatly. With each of the focus group leaders, they now have the understanding that the Advent UCC will be in partnership and will do whatever we can do to promote their professional ambitions. Each of them was personable and was more than willing to allow their content to be spread to the entire congregation. In addition to the focus group leaders, I also want to extend my personal gratitude to the personal trainer and owner of Five Point Fitness, who provided a substantive cardio and weight resistance training three days a week with excellence. She played an instrumental role in making each program participant feel comfortable with their current level of fitness; yet challenged them to get stronger each week.

I want to applaud the program participants and their consistency throughout the entire program. I took attendance, unbeknownst to them, and they were there each Sunday morning, each Wednesday evening for the focus group, and were present multiple times during the week as they were able. The program participants completed the surveys they were given during the week and consistently offered feedback and the impact that made in their lives throughout the program. While the information provided

was primarily directed to the participants in the program, the entire congregation was also introduced to some of the information through the sermons each week and by word of mouth. Several members of the congregation approached me and shared they would like to participate in the program if I decided to do it again at the church. In addition to the program being executed inside of the church, because of previous relationship, I was given the opportunity to present the Inside Out Health Initiative on the radio station here in Columbus, Ohio.

While there were so many positive aspects of the program that flowed well, there were many obstacles along the way that caused creative planning. In December 2019, the world experienced a pandemic in what is known as the Coronavirus or Covid-19. The world, figuratively speaking, came to a stop and hundreds of thousands of people died. As the world slowly began to resume, technology became a resource of significant value. With the introduction of wearing masks, six feet socially distancing, and vaccine mandates, meeting in person became a health risk. For me to conduct the program, I met with the professional and contextual associates over the technological platform called Zoom, which is a video conferencing tool to assist in remote communication.

The Advent UCC slowly resumed in-person worship and the context associates assisted in the planning for preparing each focus group to be held in-person and over the Zoom platform. Advent UCC is a smaller congregation and each of the context associates were also participating in the program. As a result, I ran the technology while other invited guests lectured, and I ran the technology simultaneously of me presenting as well on Wednesday evenings. This was not always a smooth experience, especially if there were technical complications. I lacked the necessary personnel to assist me in the

endeavor. The first couple of weeks were a struggle but I strategized and smoothed out the process. The participants were patient with me; however, that is not the experience I wanted them to have.

In addition to managing media equipment, it was challenging to engage the in-person crowd and the online Zoom crowd as well. I saw it as my responsibility to keep the online community engaged. I tried to read their comments as I or an invited guest presented, but juggling all the different variants was a challenging project unto itself. Each Wednesday, I had to arrive at the church extra early to arrange the sanctuary six feet apart and in a way that would create organic and fashioned dialogue.

In the beginning of the planning process, I developed a partnership with a not-for-profit organization in Columbus, Ohio, and they were excited about the program and how we would contribute to each other. This organization had a curriculum that would meet the mental and physical portion of the program. They not only committed to their curriculum, but they had competent staff that were willing to share after their normal business hours. This organization looked for opportunities to partner with local churches and their leadership green lit them moving forward. Unfortunately, the partnership failed to go according to plan. A few weeks prior to starting the program, the leadership within the organization wanted an overview of my project and I provided them with all the information they sought. Through time constraints, they informed me that they would not participate in the first part of the project as planned exactly one week before we started the program in August.

This became very distressing for me, however, a friend who worked for the organization desired not to leave me or the church stranded, and she recommended a

mental health counselor who graciously accepted and fulfilled the role. I continued providing the organization with the information they needed, and they committed to continue their portion as it relates to the physical health towards the end of the program. Unfortunately, the partnership failed to go according to plan again. Exactly one week before they were supposed to provide instruction, they pulled out of the program citing a redistribution of resources due to Covid. Since this organization pulled out for a second time, the same friend recommended a nutritionist and physical trainer to cover the physical health. Both individuals more than proved their worth and I am still connected to them to this day.

There was another change in the program soon before the program was to take place. In the original project proposal, I wanted each participant to engage in counseling. This had to be changed due to HIPPA laws whereas I would have to ask each participant to disclose what they discussed in private counseling, and I thought that would be an inappropriate boundary. Stepping away from individual counseling, I changed to a group counseling format; however, it was not feasible to organize this idea with the limited time allotted. I encouraged participants to engage in individual counseling to help process concerns that kept them from moving forward.

To make this program stronger, I would make different choices. When I linked up with the not-for-profit organization, I placed all my eggs in one basket. In the future I will seek to partner with multiple organizations and be more readily prepared if a business can no longer commit as before. I would also start the partnership planning between the organization and the church much sooner in the process and plan it for at least six to twelve months in advance.

In the future, as I examine and envision what the program could look like in the future, I would like to open it up for more clergy to play a role in partnership. I would like to develop more of the intentional role for clergy to play in modeling responsible behavior in front of the congregation. This program significantly impacted the church, and I would like to see this program replicated in other church contexts. As for the Advent UCC, we have a health and wellness ministry, and through consultation soon we will transpose the vision for the Inside Out Health Initiative onto the current structure of the ministry. The ministry is in the process of a change, and it is time for a new vision to be implemented. Eventually, health and wellness will be the lens through which Advent UCC will see and do ministry. We want the people to be healthy in every aspect of their lives. As the congregation becomes healthier in mind, body, and spirit, so will the communities from which our members emerge.

I also envision this program not only affecting the church, but the community as well. This project has challenged me to delve into further research as our communities suffer physically, spiritually, and mentally. For example, if we provide the community with tools to increase their nutritional awareness, but never acknowledge or attempt to provide solutions for the quality, or lack thereof, of grocery stores, how can the community be successful? I want to further explore the caliber of corner stores in our communities, and acknowledge that in many communities of color, there are food deserts. Access to quality grocery stores may be challenging for many as some of these stores are not near the community in question.

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